



... being heroes every day



While others were afraid to go over the edge, Rusty proved fearless: a unique character trait which made him invaluable in dangerous terrain such as this.

is key. Adrenalin and emotions should run high, and unite team members in an objective, nurturing and developing trust and communication: essential factors in a real search. Training should also test the team's physical limits.

For a team to be of genuine use, not only is a properly trained canine 'nose' and sound communication between team members essential, but

both should be capable of handling the rigors of a mountain, a desert, an avalanche field – or whatever physical barriers come between the team and search success. Training enables an understanding of capabilities, and allows the human team member to know exactly where he or she is proficient and what their limitations are.

Most of our canine partners become different creatures in the field; they are in charge. Filled with self-confidence and determination, they expect their partner to trust them, to follow them, to know that their nose knows. They also sense our pride in accomplishment when they succeed, and our pain in defeat.

You've read firsthand accounts of exceptional actions driven by training, and that extra – the canine 'heart' that steps up, takes over, gets done what needs doing, regardless of training or previous experience. When our partner's ability to learn is focused for work at our sides, he responds with the absolute knowledge and expertise necessary to accomplish trained tasks.

Self-confidence also promotes intelligent disobedience, strengthening a personality that empowers the canine hunt drive. Now, combine instincts that sense the atmosphere of an uncertain situation, and our partners will provide whatever action the situation requires. All searches are filled with the unknown; training can only provide for some potential scenarios, and our partners fill the gaps with their innate senses and instinctive intelligence. Somehow they know, and find whatever extra is needed to get the job done.

All of the people in all of the stories in this book benefited daily from these partnerships, and the unique intelligence and insight a dog brought

“At present, there are over 150 air-scenting search dog units around the country from Alaska to Georgia, and from Maine to California. New units are continually being formed. While specific training methods and operating procedures may vary from unit to unit, the basic concept of searching with air-scenting dogs is quite uniform (based on the pioneering work of Bill Syrotuck). Such uniformity enables SAR-responsible agencies to know what to expect when they request search dogs, and to know how to best deploy them in the field. It also enables teams from different units to work together on large-scale searches.

“Handlers work their dogs downwind of the section assigned to them, or cover the area in a way that provides dogs with the best scenting coverage. Handlers map the area they have covered and report their POD (probability of detection) to the plans section or operations leader upon completing their assignments.” - National Association for Search and Rescue (nasar.org): SAR Dog Fact Sheet⁶

into their lives, and into the search field, nurturing that special bond and connection.

In ‘Wilderness Strategy for Dog



Directing Rusty with touch, voice inflection and hand signals for a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) test, Jim indicates the exact direction Rusty is to take to reach a simulated disaster.

Handlers,’ Marcia Koenig gives great advice for canine search teams:

- Searching with dogs requires an awareness of wind and scent and how to best utilize them
- Know what the wind will do
- Do what you can to take advantage of the wind. The highest percentage of coverage comes with letting the wind bring the scent to the dog
- Non-thorough searching (hasty search) gets the handler into the area quickly to see what it’s like, and provides information to the operational leader to aid in the search planning. It gets the SAR team into detection range of the subject – either with the handler’s voice or the dog’s nose. Hastily searched areas must be mapped as they will contain holes in coverage that may need to be searched later
- On a search, the decision on how to search various areas depends on what the sheriff wants and on what other resources are available to him
- However, hasty search techniques are necessary for subjects who are likely to be moving out, such as hikers and hunters. And more people are found from opening up search patterns than from staying with a tight pattern

Therapy partners

A gift to those in pain

Our therapy partners possess a unique mystical ability that touches not only the heart, but also the soul of those in pain. Most of what a therapy partner does defies explanation, and all the obedience classes and socialization in the world will only produce a social, obedient partner: the ability to reach into the soul of someone in pain, that's instinct, and extremely rare. A well-behaved therapy partner working in nursing homes, schools, libraries, and hospitals is priceless, prompting smiles and tender moments that

benefit emotional and physical wellbeing. But the stories which follow are about that deeper innate ability – canine heart – that soothes and calms a tormented spirit.

Therapy partners instill a sense of tranquility and wellbeing, which, in some cases, allows healing to begin.

Providing a glimpse of therapy dogs in action was not difficult because dozens and dozens of volunteers step forward, train exhaustively, and then give much of their time to let others enjoy the big brown eyes and soft nose of a dog which say: I am here for you – I am



“Far from being a luxury, pets are now recognized as a necessity – friends who fortify us daily with their gifts of love, loyalty and laughter.” – Dr Allen Schoen

here *just* for you. Therapy partners can single out the one person in a room full of strangers who needs help. Their olfactory senses are sensitive to the changes in our bodies; they know when something is not right, and in some cases, they know this before the person does. Animals who sense imminent death, or physical or emotional crises are drawn to the individual to provide comfort.

The therapy animals in the stories which follow offered all of themselves without holding back, something rarely experienced, especially between different species and with complete strangers, as the following story about my retired narcotics specialist, Lex, who was also an intuitive therapy partner until her passing in 2012, illustrates.

Nan and Lex

The smell of chemicals in the ward seemed especially strong as I looked around to give some direction to Lex, but she had already climbed onto the couch and into his arms, positioning her muzzle in his long, gray beard, which looked as though it might weigh the same as he did. Small in stature, he gently cradled 75lb (34kg) of German Shepherd as his tears fell into his beard, rolling onto her muzzle. For more than five minutes all of us – patients, nurses, me – sat motionless, not wanting to intrude.

What took place in those five minutes? I've contemplated those moments over and over, and I still don't understand why or how Lex knew this man needed her. How did he communicate his need to her? Why did she respond with such total compassion and submission? Their silent communion went on forever, it seemed: did he have so much pain to



Nan and Lex.

ease?

A week later the same man knelt to greet Lex, scratching her ears and speaking softly, but with renewed confidence and strength, and then they both simply moved on. As an afterthought, he turned to me and said "She knows, she knows I don't need her today?" Some seven months after that, a chance meeting in a parking lot placed these two together once again. As the man knelt to scratch her ears, these once-intimate strangers, seemingly remembering 'that time, that pain,' gently touched then went on their way."

Nan

Therapy partners are capable of amazing things: noting the slightest change in the eye's pupil; distinguishing the fingerprints of identical twins; sensing imminent strokes (a neurological disease) and cancer (a physiological disease). And when these partners are repeatedly exposed to the pain of humankind, their giving and compassion help in ways that can't be equalled.

Pain can throw up a wall of isolation and hostility often

**"Until one has loved an animal, part of their soul remains unawakened."
– Anatole France, *For the Love of Saint Thais***