

AWMA Magazine

Quarterly Magazine for Members of the American Working Malinois Association

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by Catherine Louis

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Feb 2006: A word from the Editor

Sunday, February 5th, 2006

Hello,

Hopefully you all have received an invitation from me to join the yahoo group that has been set up for AWMA. If you have not, and would like to be included in the group, please send me your email address. The name of the group and the group email address is:

americanworkingmalinoisassociation

americanworkingmalinoisassociation@yahogroups.com

If anyone has any ideas, suggestions, or pictures for the magazine, please send them to my personal email address. I am still looking for a volunteer to write an article about the upcoming

AWDF championship. It promises to be an exciting event and it would be nice to have an article for those who are unable to attend.

As always, thank you to everyone that has been helping out!

Desiree' Shaw

dezireeshaw@yahoo.com



Funny Bone

Sunday, February 5th, 2006



Brag & Wags

Sunday, February 5th, 2006

Congratulations...

Good Luck Carrie!

Carrie Silva of Florida is entering her dog in a French Ring trial in February 2006. Carrie and her dog "Ajax Ot Vitosha" who is only 15 months old have only been training together for ring sport since July 2005. They have made amazing progress and are expected to excel in the sport. Good Luck Carrie all of your friends are cheering you on!



Congratulations!

Dre Hastings from Arizona and his malinois "Zion Ot Vitosha" earned their BH this past month. They did an excellent job. This team has a lot of potential and we are all excited to see them at high level competitions. Congratulations from your "true" friends!!

Got brags? Please send them to the [Editor](#).

Search and Rescue with a Malinois

Sunday, February 5th, 2006

Night Search: An end-user point of view an Operational Emergency Communication Device.

I snuck into a State Park last night about midnight to hone up on nighttime navigation and searching skills with my canine (her name is Juju – a 5 year old Belgian Malinois). Juju and I are an operational search team, members of a NC SAR unit. Before I left the “subject who will be found” I asked for a scent article (told the subject to “rub this gauze on your skin for a minute and then seal it up in this plastic bag”). After I secured the scent article, I sent the subject off at the south end of the park, with a flashlight, cell phone, a map, coffee, a sleeping bag and a heavy-duty Therm-a-rest “base camp,” with instructions to “find a cozy nook in the park and go to sleep.”

Juju and I then take my vehicle to find another entrance to the park, with her getting stoked to search, scream-yelping with anticipation in the backseat of the car while watching the subject get himself lost as we pull out of the drive.

Winds were variable, generally south easterly. I decide to enter the park on the NW side and grid the terrain towards the SE entrance. I readied my 24-hour pack: 1st aid kit, extra clothes, gear, each pocket of my pack carefully arranged as if each compartment in the backpack was a room in my house. I checked to make sure my

“kitchen” compartment was complete with Vanilla Goos, that I had extra water for both of us. I also checked my “garage” pocket to make sure I had extra batteries and bulbs for the 3 flashlights I carry. I checked my “bathroom” pocket to make sure my first-aid kit was completely replenished. When all my gear was checked, my backpack and trekking pole ready to go, topographical park map hanging from my neck in a waterproof bag, I focused on Juju.

A friend of mine let me borrow a wrist-sized GPS tracking device and I was anxious to try it out on Juju. I turned it on, and carefully stuck it in Juju’s vest pocket, zipped it up good and secured the zipper with a twist-tie (since it wasn’t mine I thought I should be careful.) It’s really cool to see the direction of a K9’s travel mapped to terrain (so that I can learn from terrain and weather conditions to try and decipher how the dog first got that bare inkling of scent to then hone in on the victim). I got out her bell and stuck it on her collar. I pulled out her Auroralite collar and I turned it on, making her look like a green alien dog, and we were ready to go. After



Catherine Louis and Juju

setting and marking the “start” waypoint on my Garmin, I took the sealed plastic bag with the gauze scent article, made her sit, opened the bag and passed it in front of her saying “check it.” (She sticks her whole face in the bag and takes a huge whiff...hilarious to watch.) I gave her the “find him!” command and she’s off and running.

Do you recall the feeling of riding a bicycle in the evening, down a hill, and noticing that the air gets cooler as you descend to the bottom of the hill? This is where her chances to locate the scent best are in the evening—at the bottom of hills, streams, ditches or ravines. I plotted a route zigzagging across the park to take advantage of the lower areas of stream beds or dry ditches.

I noticed I was having a problem using my headlight—keep checking in on my dog and blinding her. Just when I blinded her the 3rd time the light fizzed and went out. I switched the batteries to my handheld (is it the batteries or the bulb?) to determined that I have my first set of dead batteries and I’m only 30 minutes into the problem. No matter: the handheld cave light I carry in my “toolkit” pocket will work better, and I won’t be blinding her unnecessarily. She is well-lit with her Auroralite collar and without the headlight now when I look at her I’m not blinding her should she happen to be looking at me at the same time.

A wonderful thing about nighttime searching is noticing all the glowing eyeballs in the dark; the woods are teeming with animals trying to sleep. Juju’s pretty good about ignoring everything but what she has been instructed to find, but there can be instances where it is quite tempting to search for animals instead of a lost victim. A not-so-wonderful thing about nighttime searching is avoiding the spiders: I ran across a web that stopped me dead in my tracks it was so large. I hurried out of there quickly—spewing the spider’s web in the process.

We searched for scent for about an hour and a half and decided to take a break. She found a stream at a bend that looked like a good spot for me too, so I sat on a big rock. I hadn’t looked at the Garmin so I brought it out and...turned it on (again? Was powersave on?) and realized that I had dead batteries in my GPS. I could pull out the spare batteries, stick them in, and we’d be off and running. I did this—and tried again. Nothing happened. I then realized that my bag full of spare batteries was really the dead batteries from the mock search exercise last weekend! No matter! I have her GPS in her vest. I pulled out her GPS—to find a black blank screen. No matter! I have my compass and my map so I put my GPS back in the backpack and her GPS back in her vest. We were together so I turned her collar off to save her batteries, and used the hand-held light to see where we were. Aligning to the North, checking the map and terrain, I located the bend in the stream on the map that matched the bend in the stream where we were.

At that precise moment during our break four deer crossed the stream exactly—what looked to be OVER—the dog. She of course was highly taunted by this rash display of “you can’t catch me” (being a herding dog and all) and took off after them. I gathered my gear as fast as I could and fell in behind—shouting for her return. Without her light on she’s quite hard to see. A good 10 minutes later I hear her bell as she comes up behind me all happy and tired—she apparently had gone back to where she had left me and located me from there.

I turned her lighted collar back on, checked the map/compass again, and headed towards what I thought was a southwesterly direction. Juju seemed rather tired, lagging behind me, cutting me off while I am walking, likely from chasing deer (“serves you right” I was thinking). I had lost my pace count so I was relying on time and terrain to judge distance, and wind direction and speed to judge where I think we should be searching. After a good 20 minutes of searching a slight gust of wind hits the back of my head—in a direction I didn’t think the wind should be coming from. I checked the map/compass again: nothing was matching to the terrain. I then realized that 20 minutes prior I had made “Compass Mistake #1” and was currently 180 degrees out of phase. When I finally turned around she gave a yelp of pleasure and then began searching in front of me. (Trust your dog: if your dog is behind you—or cuts you off, she might just be telling you that you are heading in the wrong direction.)

We got back to the stream, and my handheld light died. Knowing I didn’t have any fresh batteries, I brought out my 3rd light source—my last back-up light, another small hand-held device. YES there was light, but it too seemed weak! I thought about lights and remembered that there is one on my cell phone. I turned my hand light off and opened my cell phone. The blue display light worked just fine for reading the map. I needed to find a handrail on the map that would take me where I needed to go should all lights fail. A little farther down the stream I see a tributary on the map that would meet this stream and I could follow that up towards the area of the park not yet covered.

Not too long walking in this direction, the rate Juju began picking up scent (and speed) became directly proportional to the rate my hand light was dying. I was running to keep up and of course tripped, fell into some water, and sure enough found the tributary I was looking for! Juju heard the racket and checked back in with me, looking up the tributary she was anxious to continue. Rearranging my gear (as fast as I could, which was rather slow according to her) I stood up to say “go get him”—a bit late as she had already taken off. I stayed to the left of the tributary, working behind her listening for her bell, catching glimpses of her neon light as she works the scent cone closing in on the victim.

All the while I am thinking about my gear as my light finally fizzles down to nothing. I want an Operational Rescue Communication Device. I wanted it lightweight and waterproof. I want something with a ‘big light’ option, I think to myself as I peel away another spider web that I just walked through. My cell picture display needs to also serve as my GPS display. I want two-way radio capability to my victim or my unit members. I want secured two-way radio capability with my unit members and Incident Command when security is required. I want an emergency weather channel that notifies me (if I’m in SC searching) about the latest flood warnings for SC. I’d also like an altimeter, anemometer, pedometer, and compass should all batteries fail (with North marked so that it glows in the dark.) I also want E911 should the Vic be found needing emergency medical assistance. And while awaiting the arrival of the medical team I want to be able to use the communication device to be able to monitor the vitals of the Vic (or for that matter my K9 companion should something happen to her.) I would use this Operational Rescue Communication device. SAR/EMS personnel would use this device. We could set up elite channel partners to distribute this device for us—this would sell.

Juju's bell alerted me to the fact that she was coming back to me really fast (she had found the victim.) I braced myself for her body bang. She has added an arm-nip to her usual routine hit of front-paws-to-the-shoulders and I was crouched and ready. It's kind of funny, her bell clangs as she runs, but when her front feet leave the ground to leap up on me the bell became strangely silent before the impact. On the ground now, laughing, I give her the "show me!" command, and she heads off again. It takes 2 more body-bangs of her going back and forth between the victim and me before I finally reach the victim. She gets her final reward of chicken hotdog pieces with the victim/handler/dog all celebrating her success together at the end...searching for the hotdog bag I say "hey, do you have a spare light?" Vic says "no, good thing you are here, my flashlight batteries are dead." I finally find the treat pouch; we reward her in the dark while I recount our adventures and about my desires for the perfect Operational Rescue Communication device.

The subject's response was "until you have this gadget, you can always use her nose." We had a good laugh as we followed her lighted collar (and her nose!) out of the park.

Written by Catherine Louis of North Carolina