



SCENT ARTICLES

JUNE 2004

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Pursues

Disaster Certification

By Roger Matthews

It all started in May of 2002. I was attending a *Colorado Task Force One (COTF-1) - Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)* field training as a new FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) physician. COTF-1 is one of the country's 28 USAR Task Force Divisions. At the time, construction crews were knocking down the old McNichols' Sports Arena in Denver to make room for new parking lots, and our disaster team saw this as a good training opportunity. It turns out urban search and rescue people just can't pass up climbing through a good junk pile. As an avid hockey fan and player since age 3, McNichols' had held fond memories for me. I had watched hockey games at the old arena many times. I even played there on several occasions as a young wobbly ankled kid; laughable entertainment between hockey periods for fans of the former Colorado Rockies Hockey Team. It was sad to see McNichols sitting in a big gnarled heap, but interesting to watch the way the Colorado Task Force worked. I had never seen all of the I.C.S. branches first hand – *you mean there really are "Plans" and "Logistics" people?* I was able to meet with some of the canine handlers on a lunch break and mentioned I was with SARDOC. We discussed the differences between wilderness and disaster training. I had Loki in the car at the time, as my wife and I were planning to take a hike after the training. During our conversation they asked me if I would be interested in "trying Loki on the rubble". *Why not?* I always like to expose him to new challenges. I knew noises of heavy equipment, and uneven surfaces of the scene would be something new and interesting for him. I honestly never thought it would go beyond walking him over the rubble.

Well, he showed no observable concern for the chaos of the scene so they hid two subjects in an "easier" section of rubble and sent us out to find them. It was a blind problem. Another chapter out of the

book *“How To Set Your Search Dog Up For Complete Failure – A Handlers Guide”*. Of course, that’s when the **Fox 31 News** reporters showed up and started filming. *No pressure –its just that we are on TV, advertised as a “disaster dog team”, and have absolutely no idea what we are doing and oh by the way it’s a multi-victim problem.* I tried to run away, but the urban handler with me told me to go ahead and “just work your dog”. Well, we did our best, found the subjects, but he didn’t do a “bark alert”. *Then why should he?* I apologized to the other canine handlers for being on TV instead of them. I was shocked when they asked me if I would consider trying Loki in disaster work. The USAR Task Force cannot deploy without a full set of positions, and at that time there was a shortage of canine handlers. “Of course!” (Did I have any idea what I just got myself into?) – I have a hard time saying “no” as some of you might have witnessed.

The next thing I knew we were training with some of the disaster teams, who just 8 months earlier had been sent to search the World Trade Center. We began training twice a week and attending meetings with the Search Team. (The Search Team consists of canine handlers and fire fighters trained in electronic search techniques – such as the use of fiberoptic cameras and heat sensing equipment.) I tried to stress that I was a member of the Medical Team, and was merely participating to give my dog something to do between wilderness trainings. Unfortunately, I underestimated the mind control powers of some of the FEMA handlers. I also failed to suppress my own adrenaline addiction. My enthusiasm towards training led to our first “basic disaster dog – or Type II” test in late May of 2003. We were not completely ready to test. I knew that, but was advised it would “be a good experience no matter what happens”. Also, the test was to be held in Boulder, so we wouldn’t incur travel expenses. Well they were right, I did learn a lot, despite our ultimate failure in the disaster search portion of the test. Loki just wasn’t willing to bark due to the confusing scent picture. It was a confidence problem. Loki has never been much of a “barker” in the first place – so it was no surprise it took 6 months of daily training just to get him to bark on command. From that I had to bridge the bark command to the disaster pile find. We weren’t done with that last phase of training when we tested in Boulder. After our failure we worked and worked to improve our skill.



Eleven months later we were scheduled for our second test. Our confidence had really grown in a number of ways; Loki’s age and greater general working experience as well as more rubble pile time. This time the test location was Lincoln, Nebraska. We arrived in Lincoln on Friday April 15th, tired and in need of a good stretch after 7 hours of straight ahead driving. My dad came along for company, which I really appreciated. Having a “normal person” along always seems to take my mind off the stress of a test. There was a pretest meeting that night so we could review the ground rules. It was very interesting to meet the other people testing. There was a policeman with his canine from downtown New York City, a woman with a Portuguese Water Dog from California, along with dog teams from New Mexico, Indiana, and two of us from Colorado. I don’t think any of the handlers slept well that night, there was too much on our mind, which was silly because most if it was out of our control.

On the morning of the test it was 92 degrees and blustery. The air was dry and windy with dust clouds billowing in the cornfields. Cumulus clouds were visible to the west. Not my favorite testing conditions, being a mountain resident of 9,000 ft.

We were randomly selected to be “team one out of eight” – meaning Loki and I would be first at each station. The evaluators would maintain this order throughout the entire test. The test starts with dog aggression testing, then on to agility, control, and alert testing, and ends with a rubble pile search. There are always observers at the test, and they can number as high as twenty people watching each station. Having a crowd like that observe your test is something quite foreign to wilderness certification testing. I knew I would have to focus on my dog and our task, and ignore the audience – easy as pie (*gulp*).

Dog aggression is not an issue for us, and the canine direction (being able to move your dog to different locations from a distance using voice and hand signals) has become one of our specialties, so we flew through those stations. I was worried about the next segment though – *agility*. The agility field is a surprise until the handler approaches the station. Unfortunately for us, Loki had injured a hind foot the week before the test. I think he might have had a broken toe but couldn’t see it on X-ray. He was having some pain climbing ladders, and the ladder they picked for the test was an aluminum narrow runged piece. On the way up the ladder his right hind foot slipped and both of his back legs fell through the rungs. He ended up hanging there by his front legs, looking back at me for some encouragement. His safety was my main concern, but if he fell we would fail the station and the whole test (teams have to pass each station to continue on). I remembered thinking that this disaster stuff is different, I could really hurt my dog asking him to do some of these things. “You can do it” - I urged him quietly, and he did. He pulled himself out by his two front legs and made it up the ladder – our confidence had clearly improved from the previous year.

The last step before the rubble pile search is the alert barrel. Testers want to see your dog bark alert vigorously and without interruption for thirty seconds (see also - *seems like an eternity*). A subject is placed in a large plastic barrel with a wooden lid. The handler is required to stand 25 yards away and stay there during the test. This is a big challenge for a find-refind wilderness dog as they tend to want come show the handler there is someone in the barrel – the FEMA handlers see a dog leaving the barrel as “subject abandonment” and consider it grounds for failure. I found Loki focuses better if I ignore him after I send him out to search for the barrel. I pointed him to the barrel and urged him to “SEARCH!” (I use “search” for non-scent discrimination work like avalanche, and multi-victim problems.) I expected to hear some barking as he bolted right to the barrel without hesitation. I could see he was busy doing something at the barrel, but it wasn’t barking. What he was doing was taking the tape off the alert barrel cover. Two years ago we thought it would be fun to teach Loki to unwrap holiday gift packages. It was pretty funny until I saw him unwrapping the alert barrel instead of barking – he had never seen tape on an alert barrel before. To make matters worse, there is a three-minute time limit on the station, at minute 2:15 Loki finally had all of the tape off the cover. There was silver duct tape stuck to his head, shoulders, and paws, providing great amusement to the group of observers watching us. He finally started barking and then barked non-stop for 30 seconds. We barely passed that station. *Nothing like making it exciting.*

It seemed hotter than ever as we waited for the rubble search to begin. All eight teams had passed on to the rubble pile which is an unusually high pass rate for a Type II test. The evaluators expressed approval with the skill levels of the dog teams they were watching. Although their remarks were encouraging, I couldn’t help but feeling “*I don’t want us to be the one team that fails this thing*”. On our previous test I failed to get Loki in the spirit of barking before the rubble pile, so this time I had one of the observing fire fighters do a “run away” and got him barking right before we approached the rubble station.

I went through my pre-search questionnaire with the lead evaluator, and then sent Loki up on the pile to search. The testing handler is positioned so there is really no good view of the rubble. The point of this is to see the dog work without direction from the handler. After Loki disappeared over the first wall of concrete in front of me there was nothing to do but wait. The test has a 15-minute time limit. At minute 6:50 I was getting more than a bit nervous. *I think I might throw up*. At minute 7:00 they advised me Loki was alerting and I could enter the pile to support him. I couldn’t hear his alert over the wind and a passing freight train. I was shocked at how far into the pile he was (a good 40 yards away) – looking into the pile and barking. I advised the tester my dog had a

FBILHS (focused barking indicating live human scent) the only acceptable alert for a FEMA dog. The handler is required to indicate as accurately as possible the source of the scent. I couldn't see anything in the rubble, but pointed at the crack where he was barking. If it were a real disaster I would call for a technical search specialist who would pass a fiberoptic camera through the crack to start a visual search. I immediately restarted him – back across the rubble in the direction I had just come from, as I didn't know what he had searched prior to getting to his present location. Almost immediately he began to close in on another source towards the edge of the pile. He narrowed the cone down quickly and started barking on the second subject. I rewarded him with his Frisbee and we both made our way off the pile. The only thing left was a medical check on my dog, and to wait for our review.

The final test review is given in front of the other testers, observers, and evaluators; which adds to the excitement (i.e. see stomach ulcer). As the first to be done we were also the first to be reviewed – *we passed*. There was an expression of defeat on the faces of the 3 handlers who had not passed. Many of them had trained for over a year in preparation for the test. I felt horrible for them, but offered what encouragement I could.

The best part about our disaster training has been the improved energy and confidence I see from Loki since passing our test. I think we often underestimate the importance of keeping our dogs' training an interesting and confidence building experience. I feel they really do have a sense of their own abilities, and that exposing them to different work environments benefits both the handler and the dog. For us, urban search training seemed to break up the monotony of our wilderness trainings. Disaster work may not be right for you, but what about cross training your dog for water work, HRD, urban trailing, or avalanche?

Loki seemed to leave Lincoln with a new bounce to his step. As I threw his stick for him after our test, I thought how lucky we are as search dog handlers to work with such amazing animals. Then I let him return to being a dog – a reward that was long overdue.

For more information about disaster training visit the website: www.disasterdogs.org

For FEMA photos from the day of our test visit the website:
www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/fire/usar/pic/k9eval04/index.htm

Finally, thanks to Gail Humm who encouraged me to join the FEMA team as a doctor – a decision I will not regret.

RM

Members Attend Seminar Hosted by TSARDA
By Don Morrison

In April, three Sardoc members were present at a SAR dog conference in Georgia hosted by the Tennessee Search & Rescue Dog Association. Mike Erickson, Eric Ackerman, and I attended the weeklong function.

Mike signed up for a beginning air scent class, but was quickly promoted to the advanced class. Way to go Mike and Merlin. Eric and Torrey were taking an advanced trailing class, while Sherpa and I were there for a beginning human remains detection class.

The training was held at the Catoosa Military Training Facility, which is about 10 miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee. The base was self-contained with barracks, a mess hall, and 1,700 acres of which a large portion was wooded. My wife and I stayed at a KOA campground between the base and Chattanooga. She was out sight-seeing and goofing off while Sherpa and I slaved away day after day. The food was prepared by a couple that definitely knew how to do that “good ol’ southern cookin’”. It brought back a lot of memories for me since my parents were raised in Tenn. and my mother cooked many of the same things. (Low fat just doesn’t taste the same.)

Lisa Canfield taught the beginning HRD class. Lisa and her husband work HRD exclusively. They are called on frequently by law enforcement, and have worked some interesting cases including clearing areas in the infamous “crematory case” where the owner wasn’t cremating the bodies but burying them on the grounds. Our class was small, so Sherpa got to work 6 to 10 problems each day. I felt fortunate because in the process of starting a new discipline this much repetition is invaluable. We started out with scent association work. It is important that the dog doesn’t have an aversion to cadaver. Sherpa didn’t have an aversion, but wasn’t showing a huge interest either. We were able to work through that the first day by actually putting material inside her reward toy (I know you’re all saying gross). We progressed rapidly throughout the week. The hardest part of cross training an air scent dog is they are used to relating scent to an object such as a person or an article of clothing. We started doing light burials toward the end of the week and Sherpa didn’t want to do alerts off the scent, she wanted to find an object. Like all training, if you have any problems, you just have to back up to where everything is flowing again.

The HRD handlers in that area have a unique opportunity. Many of them have had a chance to be involved with the research going on at the University of Tenn. which is a leader in studying human decomposition. William Bass received permission from the university in 1971 to start what is known today as the “Body Farm”. This is a 3-acre plot where bodies are left to decompose in all different situations.

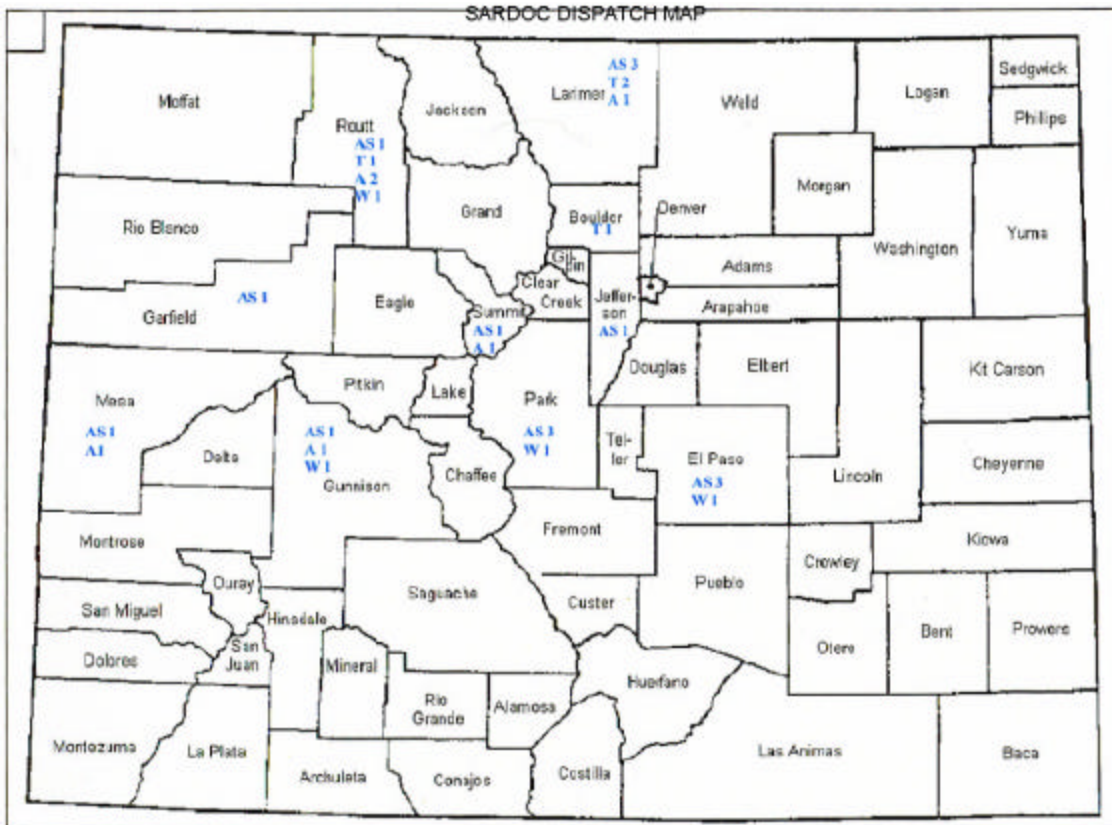
In the advanced HRD class they were doing some very interesting problems including finding blood on a toothpick, finding material set in concrete, and finding blood on a board that had been painted over. These things were done to simulate a crime scene where someone was trying to cover up the evidence.

It was really nice being able to spend a week just working with the dog. It was also great being in an environment where there are so many people sharing knowledge; you learn from everyone attending as well as the instructors. I am going to try and attend at least one seminar every year from now on.



SARDOC DISPATCH MAP

5/15/04



A=Avalanche AS=Air Scent T=Trailing W=Water

Contact Information and Board Members

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2004 Executive Board

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Southern Area: Kim Veitch - kwveitch@adelphia.net
Northern Colorado: Kathy Shepherd - bskskt@aol.com
Western Slope: Jim Vail - jmvail@springsips.com

Mission Reports

Handlers, please remember to send in mission reports for each mission whether you were fielded or not (you may not have even made it out the door prior to getting stood down). If you responded to a mission and it does not appear below, either a report wasn't sent in or it wasn't sent to the correct people. Also, if you notice that your dog team is missing from mission reports, it could be that the person sending in the report for that particular mission did not know you were responding, particularly if the mission was stood down en route. Please send in your own reports if you are consistently being left off of the reports. Please send reports via email to **both** Marcia McMahon at **KMCMAHON@amigo.net** and to **Dennis McLaughlin at kiowamc@mindspring.com**.

January 1, 2004

Location: Beaver Creek Trailhead, Fairplay, Park County

Subject: 30-year-old female

Mission: Marcia McMahon and Yeti and Roger Matthews and Loki (Park County SAR) were stood down. Marcia continued to the search scene and assisted getting the subject, who was cold and confused, to her vehicle and followed her out to the highway. The subject ended up coming down the wrong trail, which happens frequently on this particular trail.

January 7, 2004

Location: Stratmoor Valley area near Ft. Carson, El Paso County

Subject: 7-year-old female

Mission: The subject had wandered away after school and her whereabouts were unknown for two hours. The child showed up at a friend's house and the friend's mother took her home. Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (El Paso County SAR) were stood down.

January 10, 2004

Location: Highlands Ranch, Douglas County

Subject: 35-year-old male with mentality of a 5-year-old, did not speak English

Mission: Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (EPCSAR) were stood down en route.

January 26, 2004

Location: Round Mountain, Loveland, Larimer County

Subject: 17-year-old male

Mission: The subject called on his cell phone to state that he was lost after leaving the trail. Foot teams found the subject shortly after they entered the field. The subject had found a trail and was almost back to his vehicle.

January 26, 2004

Location: Monument, El Paso County

Subject: 47-year-old female

Mission: The subject had been missing for a couple of hours. She had mental issues and had called her husband from her cell phone stating that she had fallen down near some trailers and was hurt and very cold. The subject was found during a second search of her home. She was hiding in a crawl space under the stairs. She was covered by boxes and could not be seen if just looking into the crawl space. Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (EPCSAR) were stood down upon arrival.

February 3, 2004

Location: Black Forest, El Paso County

Subjects: Two 6-year-old males

Dog team used on mission: Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (EPCSAR)

Mission: The boys wandered away from the house and had been missing for one hour when the dog team started searching. They first searched south of the house without any interest or alerts. They searched north of the house and found footprints consistent with the two

boys' sizes. Grits alerted into the woods and located the boys and their dog. They were cold but uninjured.

February 15, 2004

Location: Cheyenne Canyon Park, El Paso County

Subjects: Seven people; 3 adults and four children ranging from 9 years to 15 months

Mission: The group left their vehicle at 1030 hours to hike. They climbed over a ridge and became stuck on an icy slope. They called 911 from a cell phone, which then went dead. They gave GPS coordinates that ended up were incorrect. Fire department personnel located the subjects about 500 yards up the hillside from incident base. Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (EPCSAR) were stood down as they were leaving base to begin their assignment. Marcia McMahon and Yeti (PCSAR) and Ina Bernard (EPCSAR) were stood down en route.

February 18, 2004

Location: Foothills west of Fort Collins, Larimer County

Subject: 21-year-old male

Dog teams used on mission: Dan Fanning and Bear fielded. Allen Weaver and Rosie were stood down (Larimer County SAR).

Mission: The subject had reportedly consumed a 6-pack of beer prior to hiking to the "A" above the football stadium and had not returned to the vehicle. Subject telephoned a friend stating that he was in Old Town (downtown Fort Collins) and the mission was stood down.

March 8, 2004

Location: Larkspur, Douglas County

Subject: 75-year-old male with Alzheimer's

Mission: The subject had been missing since 1030 hours and the search team was not contacted until evening. The subject had wandered away after coming home from the hospital. Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits and Gayle Humm and Jenna (EPCSAR) were stood down when the subject was found wandering along a road in the search area.

March 21, 2004

Location: La Plata Peak, Chaffee County

Subject: 22-year-old male

Dog team used on mission: Sue Purvis and Tasha (Crested Butte SAR)

Mission: Three men from Colorado Springs had gone hiking/snowshoeing on March 20 to climb La Plata Peak along the north-northwest ridge. During their descent after summiting at 1400 hours, they took a short cut down the west face by doing a sitting glissade. They had glissaded two sections when they traversed over to another snow-filled gully. The snow was beginning to become moist. The subject had already descended a long ways down the slope when the second person started his descent. This second person had gone only a short distance when the snow fractured around him. He tumbled out of control. The third man was further back and was not caught in the slide. The second man was partially buried but able to walk out of the avalanche. The two survivors looked for the subject until hypothermia and darkness set in. They reported the avalanche to the Chaffee Sheriff's Department around midnight, after it took them six hours to get off the mountain and down to the road.

St. Anthony's Flight for Life Helicopter out of Summit County flew Sue Purvis and Tasha to the scene of the slide. From the air a snowshoe was visible halfway down the slope. Seven hundred feet below the snowshoe were the subject's ski poles. Tasha alerted to an area where a probe line was then started. A prober then located the subject. He was under four feet of snow near the bottom of the avalanche path. The outstanding coordination between the dog team and the probers narrowed down the search area so that the subject was recovered within 2.5 hours.

March 22, 2004

Location: Widefield, El Paso County

Subject: 10-year-old male with ADHD and bi-polar

Mission: The child disappeared from the school playground. Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits were stood down en route.

March 24, 2004

Location: Glacier View, Larimer County

Subject: 12-year-old male with mental health issues (two previous searches for this subject)

Dog teams used on mission: Dan Fanning and Bear, Jayne Zmijewski and Lakota and Robin Anderson fielded. Allen Weaver and Rosie, and Julie Weibler (as base support) were stood down for second operational period. All LCSAR.

Mission: The subject was last seen near his home at 0630 hours. Dan and Bear searched around the house residence with little result. The boy's bicycle was found about ¼ mile east of the house near a side road. Jayne and Lakota and foot teams responded to the location of the bike. The subject was found nearby in the garage of a residence.

March 25, 2004

Location: Riverbend Ponds Natural Area, within city limits of Fort Collins, Larimer County

Subject: 6-year-old male

Mission: Dan Fanning and Bear, Julie Weibler and Zephyr, Allen Weaver and Rosie, Jaynie Zmijewski and Lakota, Natalie Ray and Falcon, Robin Anderson, and Mike Erickson (all LCSAR) were stood down.

March 27, 2004

Location: Pine Ridge, South Dakota

Subject: 45-year-old female reported missing March 18

Dog team used on mission: Natalie Ray and Falcon and Mike Erickson (LCSAR)

Mission: The subject's vehicle was located and some searching had already been done in the area of the vehicle. Circumstances surrounding the subject's disappearance were suspicious. Dog teams were requested for both March 26 and 27, but none were available until March 27. The search area was mostly plowed farmland. It had been dusty and windy with 70-degree daytime temperatures. Falcon gave alerts in the strong wind. A team on ATVs a few miles upwind of the dog team located the deceased subject.

March 27, 28 and 31, 2004

Location: John Martin Reservoir, Bent County

Subject: 17-year-old male

Dog teams used on mission: Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa/Grits (EPCSAR) and Marcia McMahon and Yeti (PCSAR)

Mission: The subject drowned when his canoe capsized in rough water on March 21. Sonar was used to search the reservoir every day since the drowning. The winds were gusting 40 to 45 mph while searching. The dogs had alerts along a rocky cliff face. The dog teams returned to the reservoir on March 31 to try to pinpoint a better location with better search conditions. They were able to triangulate a search area since they had winds out of a different direction, but it was still too large an area for the divers to search. On April 3, after sonar search operations were completed for the day, a pilot flying over the reservoir spotted the body (they had been flying over the reservoir daily).

March 31, 2004

Location: Pikes Peak, El Paso County

Subject: 53-year-old female hiker from Wyoming

Dog team used on mission: Kim Veitch and Ruffian (EPCSAR)

Mission: The subject had driven from Wyoming and was taking a short hike off the toll road when she became lost with no equipment or food. She called on her cell phone to report that she was lost. The dog team fielded before other field teams. As they were approaching the subject's location a hasty team using attraction found her.

The following mission report did not appear in last year's reports and was resolved on April 2, 2004.

November 29, 2003

Location: Colorado Springs, El Paso County

Subject: 76-year-old female

Dog team used on mission: Dennis McLaughlin and Kiowa (EPCSAR)

Mission: The subject was last seen on November 15, 2003. Her car was found with blood all over the vehicle. A suspect was already in custody and in the hospital in critical condition. A field was searched because a passerby had found several items with her name on them in the area. The dog had no alerts. On April 2, 2004 a man riding an ATV found the body in a concrete drainage culvert. This was 1-½ miles south of the area searched in November.

SARDOC MISSION REPORTS for APRIL 2004

April 3, 2004 - Saturday

Location: Boulder County, Allenspark

Subject: 21-year-old male from Iowa became separated while looking for antlers.

Dog teams used on mission: Dan Fanning and Bear with Mike Erickson as support (Larimer County SAR); Jayne Zmijewski and Lakota with Robin Anderson (LCSAR); Natalie Ray and Falcon with Estelle Purvis (LCSAR). Don Morrison and Sherpa with Robert Piwowarczyk (Park Co. SAR) were stood down while en route.

Mission: As the dog teams were working in areas within a mile or two of the PLS in an attempt to develop a direction of travel and locate the subject, the subject was found by a ranger near the Button Rock Dam which is over 7 miles away from the PLS.

April 10 and 11, 2004 – Saturday and Sunday

Location: Tie Siding, Albany County, Wyoming

Subject: 37-year-old male from Ft. Collins, CO. disappeared on April 5th. Vehicle found on April 8th. Subject missing – circumstances undetermined.

Dog teams used on mission: Natalie Ray and Falcon; Dan Fanning and Bear; Kathy Shepherd and Ember (all LCSAR) searched on 04/10/04. Jayne Zmijewski and Lakota searched on 04/11/04. Robin Anderson, Mike Erickson and Darrel Turman of LCSAR were dog team support members.

Mission: On both days, dog teams worked their assigned areas along with ground searchers. Dog teams reported some alerts to the East but were unable to locate the subject.

According to the Denver Post, the subject's body was located on May 4, 2004 in the Pole Mountain area, which is about 15 miles from where the vehicle was found.

April 25, 2004 - Sunday

Location: Lookout Mtn., Jefferson County, near Golden

Subject(s): Two male hikers, ages 19 and 20 in good health

Dog team used on mission: Paula Bindrich and Phoebe with Steve Wilson (Alpine Rescue) as support

Mission: Dog team used to clear area around LSP. Subjects located approx. 8 miles away. They had taken the wrong trail.

April 29, 2004 – Thursday

Location: Lost Park – Park and Jefferson Counties

Dog team used on mission: Marcia McMahon and Yeti with Kathy Pickart (PCSAR) as support.

Mission: Possibly overdue/unaccounted for 51-year-old male hiking from Kenosha Pass to Foxton Rd (59 miles) over a two week period – failed to check in at halfway point. Dog team searched 8 miles along trail. Subject hiked a portion of intended route, camped and hiked back to Kenosha Pass where foot team intercepted him.

SARDOC Missions YTD: 19