

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT IN K9

by Rob Lukason, Pam Rogers and Matt Devaney

Photos: Pam Rogers and Matt Devaney



There are many canine training methods and philosophies in today's law enforcement canine industry. A few of these canine training systems such as the Commercial/Pet Store Method, Military Method, or the German Method, also known as the PSP method are the most prevalent.

Historical background is critical to the canine industry. In fact, no occupation or skillset can evolve without analyzing available data, whether it is from the past or current-day teachings. For example, a department may want to add an additional trained-odor or deployment capability to explore training efficiencies in its program. Information analysis is the fuel of any profession, particularly the canine industry, which is dynamic. Whether a department wants to arrive at training/certification decisions or fine-tune new deployment strategies, researching historical data is the key to many problems.

All departments, large or small, with an active canine unit follow a training mindset or a combination of mindsets. The first step to research is to define the program. Once a definitive philosophy or system is identified, progress can be made.

Of the three methods listed above, the German Method (PSP) is a common and familiar method to the law enforcement K-9 industry, and has been in the United States since the early 1980s. As it has been in the United States for a relatively short period, it is important to recognize the importance and contribution that the PSP Method has made to the industry.

HISTORY OF PSP IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1998, the PSP standard was renamed Polizeispüerhundprüfung (Police Search Dog Testing). PSP is a standardized test of selection, train-

ing, and testing developed by the Landespolizeischule für Diensthundführer for police service dogs. The State Police School for Service Dog Handlers for PSP is located in the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen in the city of Stukenbrock, Germany.

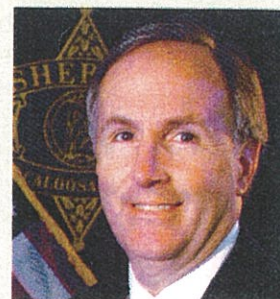
FIRST PSP-TRAINED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1981, Wendell Nope, employed by the Calcasieu Parish Louisiana Sheriff's Office, attended the Landespolizeischule für Diensthundführer. Nope passed this program and ultimately became a police canine judge under the PSP standard.

In 1982, Ted Sexton, a police officer with the Tuscaloosa Police Department in Tuscaloosa, Ala-



■ Wendell Nope



■ Ted Sexton

bama, attended the Landespolizeischule für Diensthundführer. Sexton passed this program becoming a K-9 team instructor under the PSP standard.



■ Officers of the ACLEOTC program, (left to right) Richard White, Jimmy Thorton, Pam Rogers, Ted Sexton, Dewayne Burkhalter, Matt Devaney and Randy Parker, circa 1988

PSP AMERICA

In 1982, PSP America, located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was opened by Ted Sexton. PSP America was a full-service K-9 training and boarding kennel that catered to the law enforcement community.

Wendell Nope joined PSP America in 1983. In late 1984, Nope left PSP America to train explosive canine teams for the security branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah.



■ Matthew Devaney

Matthew Devaney was a police officer and canine handler in New Mexico. He attended canine instructor training with PSP America in 1984 and joined the organization as a dual purpose instructor in 1985.

PSP America was the first canine training facility in the United States to provide PSP-based training courses to domestic law enforcement agencies.

ALABAMA CANINE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS TRAINING CENTER, A DIVISION OF SHELTON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In October of 1985, Director Ted Sexton integrated PSP America with Shelton State Community College, also located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The organization was renamed the Alabama Canine Law Enforcement Officers Training Center (ACLEOTC).

With this collaboration of a law enforcement canine training center and a State of Alabama college system, the development of PSP-based lesson plans and the format of canine training were recognized by the educational community. This was one of the first canine training programs to offer criminal justice college credit for law enforcement canine training.

From October 1985 until December 1991, the staff of ACLEOTC trained canine instructors and handlers from over 150 agencies throughout the United States as well as thirty foreign governments. In December 1991, state funding for college programs in Alabama was drastically cut. These cuts included ACLEOTC and the staff disbanded.



WHAT THE PSP METHOD OF TRAINING BROUGHT TO K-9 LAW ENFORCEMENT

During a brief period of nine years, the staff of PSP America/ACLEOTC brought the PSP training and method to the United States. This contribution has had a profound and lasting impact on law enforcement canine training in this country. Some of the effects of PSP are still seen today.

ADOPTION OF INSTRUCTOR-BASED CANINE PROGRAMS

Prior to the importation of the PSP, canine instruction and training was principally conducted by senior handlers within the unit with no specialized training other than their experience. Based on the German police and academic models, PSP America/ACLEOTC introduced the concept of advanced specialized training programs designed specifically to prepare the student to not only train canines, but also to supervise and manage a canine program. This resulted in canine programs becoming more self-sufficient and flexible and led to a more professional image of the field of law enforcement canine training.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF GENETIC DRIVES

The German police were the first to identify drives in canines. Drives are a genetic blueprint of a dog's behavior. Until PSP, there was a minimal identification of genetic drives that was usually confined to prey and defense. With the input from the PSP, this list was expanded to include over eighteen specific drive-related behaviors and over eight character traits. This expanded understanding of canine behavior has led to:

- A better understanding of how to select, train and problem solve working canines;
- The ability to better evaluate dogs in multiple areas during the selection process, which transfers to a higher



probability of successful training and deployment;

- The designing of training programs and exercises with an emphasis on enhancing desired genetic drives while diminishing unwanted genetic drives; and
- Most importantly, provided a common language between instructors and handlers in multiple agencies across the country.

THE "STAND STILL" OUT COMMAND

The use of obedience commands to obtain the release of a subject was almost unheard-of in law enforcement canine training prior to the importation of the PSP. In addition, with the program obtained from the Landespolizeischule für Diensthundführer, this idea was expanded to include the use of the preparatory "stand-still" command that was trained as a verbal cue for the dog to assume a down position. The use of the "stand still" command was followed with the canine's traditional "down" command to provide a gradual de-escalation of aggression in the dog's mind and enabled full combat with reliable releases. Another tactical advantage that it enabled was the handler's control of both the canine and subject in a search-and-cuff situation with one command.

COMBAT-BASED MUZZLE TRAINING

The use of muzzle fighting in apprehension work was just beginning to be used in the early to mid-80s. This muzzle work usually involved the decoy falling to the ground upon first contact by the canine. With the importation of the PSP, where a majority of the training is conducted in a muzzle, the use of muzzle training in this country dramatically expanded and



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goes to the ground. Instead, the decoy remains standing and enhances combat behavior by pushing the canine off and moving away. With the enhanced use of muzzle work fostered by the PSP methods, distinct training advantages were derived:

- Realistic training exercises where any situation can be safely replicated
- Agitators can be dressed and act as suspects would
- Safely acclimates the canine to back up officers
- Combats visual fixations on apprehension equipment

STREET-APPLICABLE DETAINING

In the early to mid-80s, detaining, or the bark-and-hold/reasonable force, had just started to be implemented in some areas of the United States. Most of the work was being fostered by vendors and trainers who

canine programs that were on the verge of being disbanded at the time due to increased civil actions.

THE 4-IN-1 METHOD OF ODOR INTRODUCTION

The staff of the Landespolizeischule für Diensthundführer was instrumental in developing a



had only been exposed to sport Schutzhund-style training. The training was confined to stationary, standing subjects with visible equipment. The police focused and crafted PSP methods, combined with the muzzle work and trained canines in a manner that allowed for reliable performance in realistic situations, including with prone subjects. The ability to train street-reliable detaining led to the retention of several

method by which multiple trained odors are introduced to the canine simultaneously. With this method samples of up to four trained substances are packaged in one scented reward object. The canine is conditioned to search for and locate the reward object by following the odors of the substances. The reward objects and packaging are changed daily so that the only common odors between the objects are the odors being trained. After five to ten days, the odors are separated and the canine is tested on recognition of each individual odor. The primary advantage to this method is that it reduces training time devoted to odor introduction and, therefore, allows for more time devoted to searching and indication skills.

PSP PROMOTED: CONFLICT TRAINING

Classical conditioning creates powerful associations between stimuli and responses and can also work against officers if the canine chains (associates) an improper stimulus with a response. Conflict training, which is constantly changing training so that the canine does not become patterned into an incorrect response, is used to prevent improper chaining.



PSP PROMOTED: MODULAR TRAINING

Timely rewards are crucial when training complex tasks. Segments of complex tasks should be taught in a logical series of short exercises with quick rewards. This is called modular training.

PREDEPLOYMENT RITUALS

Based on the German philosophies of heightened control during law enforcement deployment, the PSP methods introduced the implementation of procedures prior to deploying a canine in specific applications. These procedures were termed rituals and provided heightened control along with communication for the canine on what training task was to be performed. Rituals were established in the fields of detection, tracking and building search and resulted in a higher level of accuracy and enhanced officer safety in these applications.

INCREASED CONTROL IN DETECTION SEARCH PATTERNS

Canine detection work in the 1980s was in its infancy, the U.S. Customs Service had started training narcotics canines only ten years earlier. As such, the process was principally focused on the canine free-searching with minimal direction from the handler. With the German influence, which emphasizes control and accuracy, this process was modified and improved. The staff of ACLEOTC developed training and instructional methods for the handler and dog that resulted in a controlled, systematic search pattern. With these methods, the canine is conditioned to continuously follow handler direction in a tight vertical search pattern until

encountering a trained odor. This increased accuracy and efficiency in the detection field.

PASSIVE INDICATION WITH REWARD FROM SOURCE

There were two basic reward methods for detection work employed in the 1980s, and each method corresponded to the desired indication behavior. Active scratch-indicating canines were conditioned so that the reward object was obtained from a source by scratching, and passive sit-indicating canines were conditioned so that the reward object came from the handler for preforming the indication behavior. In addition, the use of the passive indication was confined to explosive detection only and was based in U.S. military training philosophy. The canine's knowledge that the reward originated directly from the handler resulted in numerous training problems such as handler dependency, fringe indicating and false indications.

The PSP detection training methods differed significantly in the training of passive indication. The canine was conditioned that displaying the passive indication will result in the reward object jumping from source or being pulled from source by the handler. This addressed the training problems that were being encountered with the other method and revolutionized and expanded the use of the passive indication in all disciplines, including narcotic detection. Other advantages to the passive indication were then identified, including decreased property damage, more versatility in training sites and aid placement, and the ability to maintain the reward-from-source methodology in an operational setting. These realizations led to a dramatic increase in the use of the passive indication for narcotic detection throughout the nation.

HANDLER PERFORMANCE SCORING AND DOCUMENTATION

The concept of documenting handler performance in training was virtually unheard of in the industry in 1985. The determination of whether a handler passed or failed initial training was principally based on a gut call by the instructor. When the PSP was absorbed into a college-based training program, it was clear that further documentation and justification of handler performance was required. This led to the development of detailed performance standard scoring in each discipline. With this system, the student is numerically scored on specific performance points with each exercise performed. These scores are then totaled, averaged and compared to an established standard to determine success or failure. This system has since been adopted by several agencies and training entities and has stood the test of time in its ability to document handler performance in training.

DISSEMINATION OF THE PSP

Graduates and staff of ACLEOTC returned to their agencies or started new training programs and entities. In so doing, the philosophies and methods of the PSP were incorporated into these programs and taught to their students. As a result, many of the aspects of the PSP have been disseminated throughout the country and assimilated into American law enforcement canine.

The State Of Utah – In the late 1980s Wendell Nope accepted a position with the Utah Police Officers Standards and Training. Nope then crafted the state's canine training and standards following the methods of the PSP. This program continues to train instructors, handlers, and canines from all across the nation and world.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) – The U.S. Border Patrol's canine program was started in 1985 and all the agency's instructors were trained at ACLEOTC. These instructors followed the methods of the PSP in advancing their program by opening a central training facility in El Paso, Texas, in 1992. In the post-9/11 era, the Border Patrol and U.S. Customs canine-training programs were consolidated. A best practices analysis was conducted and a majority of the Border Patrol/PSP methods were incorporated into one training program for CBP. Customs and Border Protection operates two training facilities that train handlers, instructors and canines in multiple disciplines. A cornerstone of this training is the methods of the PSP. The CBP Canine Program



currently has over 1,500 canine teams nationwide, trains over 300 canine teams per year, and trains instructors, handlers and canines for local agencies and foreign governments.

WHERE ARE THE U.S. PSP ORIGINATORS IN THE INDUSTRY TODAY?

Matt Devaney: Devaney is the research and development coordinator for the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection K-9 Program. He is a master trainer with NAPWDA and teaches at multiple national level conferences and seminars.

Wendell Nope: Sergeant Nope is a K-9 training supervisor and program coordinator for all K-9 training and certifications for law enforcement K-9 teams in the State of Utah.

Ted Sexton: In 1990, he was elected sheriff of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama where he established a multiple canine unit. He has recently accepted a position with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department as Division Chief for Homeland Security.

Pam Rogers: Rogers owns Kasseburg Canine Training Center, LLC in New Market, Alabama, and continues to select, train and provide canines for law enforcement agencies.

Jimmy Thornton: Thornton is a sergeant with the Hoover Police Department in Hoover, Alabama. He has continued to train and handle multiple canines throughout his law enforcement career and is a guest instructor at canine seminars.

Randy Parker: Parker is a corporal with the Campbell County Sheriff's Department in Gillette, Wyoming. He currently works a dual purpose canine and was instrumental in establishing the State of Wyoming POST law enforcement canine certification, which is PSP based.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

Just because the solutions of problems are not visible at any particular time does not mean that those problems will never be resolved. History has a way of changing the terms in which problems are situated and encountered by instructors and handlers.

It is important to research and become familiar with a department's canine history, as it might offer insight and understanding to how and why certain training elements have been developed or discontinued. When instructors or handlers consider the history of their department's canine training philosophy, the success of present-day training development is ensured.

For the departments and agencies that have a German/PSP method ancestry, you may find some of the information to be similar to current teachings. Many departments use an assortment of styles and training philosophies, which is evident in the dynamic elements that provide the training philosophies of today.

There are many other reputable, highly qualified PSP-based instructors and trainers in the community who also contribute to the evolution of the canine profession. This article is a snap shot of the PSP Method and some of the early contributors of this particular training philosophy.

Be Safe, Train Hard, Do Your Research. ■