

Subject:

RE: TC Archives

Deluge of cards helps ease pain of Chase's loss - by Sandra McCulloch - Times-Colonist staff - Ray Smith photo

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Fri Sep 23 1994

Section: News

Byline: Sandra McCulloch

Bruce and Tracey Clark's old English bulldog Matilda spends much of her day wandering the yard of the couple's Triangle Mountain home, looking for Chase.

She's lost without her best buddy of 2 1/2 years, a German shepherd playmate who outweighed her by 36 kilograms and tolerated her badgering and taunts and teasing with gentleness and good grace.

It has been a week since Chase, a member of the Victoria Police Department's canine unit, died after being impaled on a 1.5-metre sprinkler stand while pursuing a suspect. Bruce Clark, a constable, had worked and played with Chase for 2 1/2 years. The dog had an uncanny sense of who was friend and who was foe, said Clark. "He was an incredible diplomat - he'd make an incredible fuss over the inspector [Brian Hayes, Clark's superior]. We flew to Las Vegas twice to go to seminars and both times, Chase rode in the first-class passenger cabin. Everybody wanted to see him - even the pilot." The dog died at 1 a.m. last Friday of heart failure triggered by a massive infection. The Clarks got the news at their home when a fellow Victoria police officer phoned. Both were devastated.

But easing their grief was a deluge of cards, letters, faxes and phone calls from friends and strangers who heard of Chase's death and wanted to extend their sympathy.

To date, the Clarks have received well over 100 cards and letters and countless phone calls. "We'd thought we'd get a few cards from close friends, but then it just went nuts," he said.

Tracey Clark added that the support "does help, knowing you're not dealing with grief by yourself. We get it together and then find ourselves falling apart again." They received sympathy greeting cards with heartfelt notations, cards drawn by children who'd met and remembered Chase at school, several poems paying tribute to the loyal dog who gave his all right to the end.

The sentiment is sometimes overwhelming, say the couple, who now read the mail with a box of tissues within reach.

Clark said special thanks is owed to the ambulance paramedics who put compassion ahead of the regulations by giving the dog first aid and rushing him to veterinary hospital via ambulance. "They were e going to go Code 3 - lights and siren - but I told them not to use the siren, because Chase gets all excited when he hears it. He thinks it's time to go to work," said Clark.

The Clarks know the hurt won't go away overnight. It comes back every time Matilda makes her rounds through the house, looking for the lost member of the family.

But a major distraction is just around the corner - Tracey is within days of giving birth to their first child. "I've lost my Lamaze coach - we used to pant together," Tracey said. She paused, then added, "He was part of our family."

Officers in shock after Chase dies - by Sandra McCulloch - Times-Colonist staff - photo

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Sat Sep 17 1994

Section: News

Byline: Sandra McCulloch

A dog's death Friday threw many members of Victoria Police Department into a state of shock.

One of the department's four dogs, Chase, died at a veterinary hospital early Friday from injuries suffered while he was chasing a suspect through the Hillside neighborhood the night before.

While the injury didn't affect any major organs, the dog's heart gave out from stress, said Insp. Brian Hayes.

The four-year-old German shepherd was pursuing a suspect when he jumped from a parking garage onto a lawn and was speared in the chest by a sprinkler. Chase was working with Const. Bruce Clark at the time - his handler, partner and master.

The loss has hit Clark especially hard, said Hayes. The officers working on his shift were shaken by the accident.

Clark stayed with his dog at the hospital and received support from officers on his shift and others at the department, said Hayes. "Just the fact it's an animal gets you kind of choked up. If you have a dog as a pet, you know how attached you get. An officer really depends on his animal for protection. It's not a standard kind of relationship - it's very close." Like his counterparts in the department - Clue, Joker and Smoke - Chase was always able and anxious to work and eager to please.

Chase's name often crept into the news when he made successful captures. But it was a catch of a different sort that got him media attention in March 1993. Clark and Chase were en route to an international police canine conference in Las Vegas when Chase became smitten with a female German shepherd from Surrey named Lex. The two dogs sat side by side in the aircraft seats, tongues lolling in puppy love.

While some police dogs are happy to live in kennels in the yard and be outside dogs, Hayes said Chase was part of the family and lived indoors with Clark and his wife.

Clark was starting his regular four-day break on Friday and may take holidays after that.

Victoria Police will be short one dog until Chase's replacement can be found, said Hayes, in charge of the dog squad.

Finding a police dog requires a search for one that has the brains and physique to handle the workload, said Hayes.

A dog's intelligence and prey instinct is tested first. Then the dog must be X-rayed. Victoria only uses German shepherds, a breed prone to bad hips. "You can look at 50 or more dogs before you find one that is suitable," said Hayes.

