

12-year-old, retired SLTPD K9 Duke dies

By Tony Broadfoot

Duke was a Belgium Malinois who was born on March 5, 2005. He was trained by the Dutch police in Belgium prior to us being introduced in December of 2005.



Tony Broadfoot and Duke

I was at K9 decoy school when I was first introduced to him. The owner of the contract company showed up one day during instruction with Duke in a crate. He said he had just picked him up from the airport and wanted to see how his bite was. He asked for volunteers and I eagerly accepted. I was the first person on American soil to take a bite from him and needless to say it was the start of a lifetime friendship and partnership.

I remember I went back to my hotel room that night and called my lieutenant, who had approved my request to attend decoy school. I remember saying to him "LT, a police K9 followed me home. Can I keep it?" Of course the answer was "no."

I was there at decoy school and hadn't earned the position of

a handler yet. Fast forward to February 2006. I was driving on Highway 395 when I got a call from the same lieutenant. He told me I had been selected as a K9 handler and told me to call and see if my beloved Duke was still available.

I immediately called and was told another agency had asked for the best four dogs available, sight unseen, and Duke was one of the four. I was heart broken and the owner knew it. He remembered the bond Duke and I had formed in such a very short interaction. He explained the agency had never seen the dogs they had purchased and he could give them another dog in Duke's place.

The same lieutenant and I were at the training facility a couple days later, where I came home with Duke. Duke was certified for patrol deployment and we were off running. Duke served the South Lake Tahoe Police Department from February 2006 until September 2012. During that time he was a phenomenal narcotics detection K9 that maintained continuous certification with the California Narcotics Canine Association and the Western States Police Canine association.

He was responsible for the seizure of almost half a million dollars cash collectively throughout his career and countless narcotics detection arrests. He had numerous street suspect apprehensions, none of which was ever challenged in criminal or civil court.

It will never be known how many times he saved myself or my partners' from physical confrontation, merely by his presence. He was also certified as a SWAT K9 Integrated Deployment (SKIDs) K9 and worked regularly with the SWAT team. Throughout his career Duke was recognized and received accolades and commendations and was awarded by the department as well as several other community entities.

Upon Duke's retirement he spent his time at home, mostly laying in the sun or on the couch. While he was in service we

literally spent 24/7 together. He would get anxiety if he wasn't near me. He got a little better after retirement, but still wanted to be with me all the time. We were truly attached at the hip, best friends.

I had the honor of being with Duke when he went home. Duke passed away peacefully with his head in my arms at home on his bed. I miss him so much, but know he touched so many people he will never be forgotten.

I love you Durka.

Tony Broadfoot is a former officer with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.