K9 and Handler: A Bond Like No Other
Olivia Johnson, DM

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

~ Author Unknown

Approximately seven years ago, the O’Fallon Illinois Department of Public Safety introduced a new four-legged member to their team, K9 Bobo. Bobo is a black and tan German Shepard from the Republic of Slovakia. Bobo and Officer Michael Mojzis received their training from Captain John Haller (Ret.) of Top Dogs Academy in Evansville, Indiana. The demanding six-week training course certified Bobo to search for drugs, locate discarded or lost evidence, search buildings, track criminals, and most importantly, to protect his partner. After talking with Officer Mojzis, it was obvious that the bond between K9 and handler was truly a bond like no other.

Mojzis spent more time with Bobo than with his family or his fellow officers. The pair not only worked together for 12-hours a day, but they spent overtime and downtime together as well. Needless to say, they have become very comfortable with each other.

Twice a month for the past six years, Mojzis and Bobo practiced with other area handlers and K9’s at the East/West Police K9 Training Group. Members of the group include officers from: O’Fallon PD, Caseyville PD, Cahokia PD, Granite City PD, Illinois State Police, Alton PD, and the St. Clair County Sheriffs Department. This group is comprised of approximately 10-15 officers from member agencies. The East/West Police K9 Training Group assists handlers in training their dogs and in the overall betterment of police K9’s. Mojzis knows first-hand the role this group played in his skills as a handler and in the skills of K9 Bobo. Mojzis explained: “If not for this group and its members, I
would not have been lucky enough to have the dog I have today.” Mojzis remained humble about the role he played in Bobo’s overall growth and development. He did however, talk about the numerous individuals who helped him along the way. In turn, fellow K9 handlers explained just how instrumental Mojzis was to them and their K9’s as well.

When asked about the impact Officer Mojzis and K9 Bobo have had on other K9 teams, Caseyville (IL) K9 Handler Chris Singleton remarked that Mojzis not only excelled as a handler and trainer, but he went above and beyond to help everyone in the training group excel. “Many of the handlers in the East West Police K9 Training Group remain handlers today, because of the high example set forth by Officer Mojzis and K-9 Bobo” (Singleton, 2013).

Officer Geno Wilkinson from Granite City (IL) PD said Mojzis had always given of his time and was never selfish to help other K9 teams excel. Wilkinson described Mojzis as dedicated and knowledgeable and someone who never missed a beat. Wilkinson hoped one day to be half the team Mojzis and Bobo have made.

The common thread is that K9 is a brotherhood. And this brotherhood was never more apparent then when Singleton’s own K9 Colt passed away in November 2011. Fellow handlers, including Mojzis, called Singleton a couple of times a day and stopped by to visit to see how he was doing. In addition to K9 being a brotherhood, it is a calling, and Singleton believed Mojzis and Bobo truly lived out this calling every single day, as an amazing and unstoppable duo.

Over the past six years, K9 Bobo has made quite a name for himself and his handler. Bobo received several outstanding awards from the German Shepherd Dog Club of St. Louis (2008-11) for tracking, apprehension, and narcotics detection. The pair received numerous Chief’s Commendations and the United States Police Canine Association’s (USPCA) “Catch of the Quarter” for suspect apprehension and narcotics detection. Mojzis and Bobo placed in numerous Police Dog I trials and received numerous awards. However, the one award that really makes Mojzis proud was the “2009 - Catch of the Year” from the USPCA. Mojzis and Bobo received this distinguished award for the apprehension of two suspects that had committed an armed robbery at a local fast food restaurant.

During the interview Mojzis said he received official word of Bobo’s retirement. Mojzis explained that Bobo suffered from arthritis and he was no longer a young dog. The job really takes its wear and tear on bigger dogs. During the 2013 USPCA trials, in Springfield, Illinois, Bobo suffered an injury to the disk in his back. A veterinarian at the Trials was consulted, but Mojzis wanted to get a second opinion from his veterinarian Dr. David Mears. Mears always had Mojzis and Bobo’s best interest at heart.
Unfortunately, Mears confirmed the disk issue and suggested that Mojzis think about retiring Bobo. Two feasible options for Bobo’s care included spending the rest of his life on pain medicine, which could lead to other internal issues, or surgery to repair the injury. Mojzis knew surgery was the right thing to do. He wanted to give Bobo the best life and retirement possible. Mojzis said he could never thank Dr. Mears enough for all he had done for him or his partner. Bobo was not only a police K9, but more importantly, he was part of the Mojzis family. Mojzis knew Bobo did his job and did it well. But he also knew that Bobo sacrificed his body for the job. This was time to pay Bobo back. Coming to grips with Bobo’s retirement is difficult, but Mojzis knows he is making the best decision for the right reasons.

Mojzis and Bobo gained the respect of fellow handlers, officers, and even those in Dispatch. Mojzis smiled and said dispatch always knew when he was on the radio, because Bobo would not stop barking. Thinking back on Bobo’s career, Mojzis recalled Bobo’s first apprehension as if he were recounting his child’s first day of school. This is a milestone for any handler, but Bobo’s first apprehension was extra special. Not only did Bobo’s exceptional tracking skills catch the bad guy in record time (1:18), but the dispatcher on the radio was none other than Lisa Mojzis, Officer Mojzis’ wife and 2011 Illinois State Police Telecommunicator of the Year. Many good memories were made with K9 Bobo, but many more are to come. Bobo recently underwent surgery at the University of Missouri, Columbia, at the hands of Neurologist Dr. Rob Daniel, DVM to fix the disk issue. A subsequent MRI confirmed that Bobo had two bulging discs, which put additional pressure on the spinal cord. And to again show the strength of the K9 bond, Officer Singleton and his wife Stephanie surprised the Mojzis’ when they showed up in Columbia, Missouri for Bobo’s surgery. The surgery was a success and the moral support from good friends made this difficult time much easier.

Bobo no longer works in a law enforcement capacity, but he is taking in some well-deserved time off to rest and relax at the Mojzis residence. We want to thank Officer Mojzis and K9 Bobo for all the hard work with the O’Fallon Department of Public Safety. We also want to wish the Mojzis family all the best in the future.

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Officer Michael Mojzis started with the O’Fallon Police Department in 1994 as a Police Explorer and continued with the department in 1996 as a Park Ranger. In 2000 he became a commissioned officer and attended the Southwestern Illinois Police Academy. Before becoming a K9 handler, he worked several years in traffic. In September 2006, Officer Mojzis was partnered with K-9 Bobo and both underwent the Top Dogs Academy six week training course under the direction of Capt. John Haller (Ret.) of the Evansville, IN Police Department. Partners Officer Mojzis and K9 Bobo hit the streets in November of 2006. The dedicated pair trained twice a month with the East West Municipal Police K-9 Training Group. Correspondence can be sent to Officer Mojzis at: mmojzis@ofallon.org www.jghcs.info [ISSN: 2161-0231 Online] JOURNAL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT/VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3
Additional information regarding the - East/West Municipal Police K9 Training Group: can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/eastwestpolicek9
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