

Adoption of 'paw patrol' proposed by police chief

By MATT SPEISER

When Ray Belgard took over as Watsonville police chief last year, he stepped up the use of foot patrols in town. If he has his way, the "paw patrol" will become an added enforcement feature.

The Watsonville Police Department has proposed a canine program — using police dogs to assist officers not only on patrol, but in crowd control, searches of buildings and in tracking.

Officer Janet Noble drew up the proposal with the encouragement of Belgard, and it's now under consideration for inclusion in next year's budget or possibly as the target of a fund-raising effort.

The bottom line in the argument used by dog proponents is that if you have to risk a life in the line of work, better a dog's than an officer's.

In addition, they argue, dogs are more effective than officers in certain areas of police work.

Police are called hundreds of times a year when burglar alarms sound, and the usual follow-up requires a search of the building — time-consuming and often dangerous work. However, trained dogs, by scent and sound, could ferret out any burglars in moments, Noble said.

The search of a department store, for instance, requires hours of the time of several policemen, but would be quick work for a dog, who after detecting a burglar would hold him at bay, according to Officer Noble.

Dogs, because of their tracking powers, can easily be trained to give pursuit in cases where the thieves are seen leaving the scenes of burglaries, she argues.

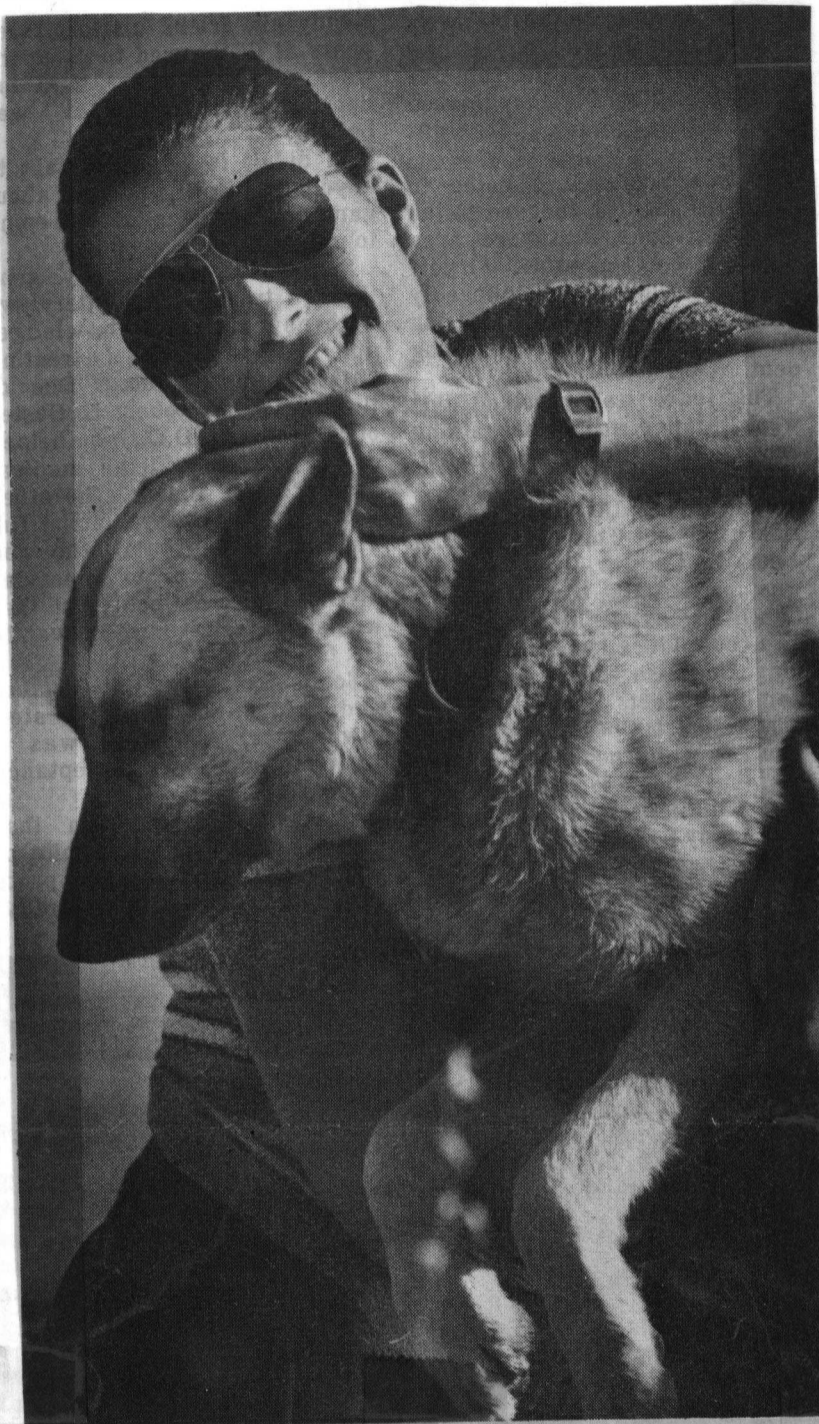
"If you can see him (the burglar), you can catch him with a dog," she said.

Other uses for tracking dogs are in finding people lost in the woods, tracking down prowlers and helping the fire department locate people in buildings being evacuated.

Dogs are also effective in controlling crowds. For some reason, people are more responsive to a dog's growl than to almost any other threat of force, Noble said.

Police departments are not unaware of the public relations value of dogs, and some have used canines in breaking the ice with the public.

Resistance to police use of dogs is often based on fears that highly trained animals might tear innocent people from limb to limb.



Janet Noble makes friends with Gangloff's dog Pepper

But, says Officer Noble, the dogs are trained to attack only when ordered. As a rule, she said, the dogs are ordered to simply detain a suspect. They will attack only if the person moves.

And Noble, a self-described "animal nut," says the dogs are as lovable as any ordinary pooch.

"They are not vicious," she said.

In a recent demonstration, Santa Cruz Police Officer Marvin Gangloff Jr., who has trained dogs for 10 years, gave a series of commands directing his dog to pursue a suspect and hold him until Gangloff arrived. Only when the dog was told to attack did he do so, and when he was ordered to stop, he stopped. Even the art of attacking is refined. The dogs go for the

arm, dig in and hang on. They're not easily thrown off, and they don't maul the suspect unless he continues to fight back.

Gangloff and Noble say instances in which dogs viciously attack people unnecessarily are rare, and these cases, known as "bad bites" in the trade, are considered the trainer's fault. "It's up to the trainer to know when to use reasonable force."

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN
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Police dogs are not your ordinary mutts. Their training is extensive and not particularly cheap. And each has only one officer as master.

Fully trained dogs cost about \$5,000 each. After that one-time cost, however, the expense is relatively low. The dogs and trainer must go through courses at regular intervals, and the dog usually lives with the officer.

The uses to which dogs are put

vary from one police department to another. At the Santa Cruz Police Department, Gangloff's dogs (which are owned by him, not the department) are used only on special occasions. One instance of note was the successful search more than a year ago for convicted murderer Billy Mansfield after he escaped from County Jail. Gangloff's dog "Pepper" traced Mansfield up the San Lorenzo River.

The biggest hitch in the pro-

gram so far is finding the money. Although the original proposal in Watsonville called for the purchase of three dogs and assorted equipment, it has now been pared down to one dog and the adaptation of equipment on hand.

The department is now trying to figure out how to find the nearly \$8,000 needed even for the slimmed-down version, and is examining the prospects of city funding, public donations, or a combination of the two.



Gangloff (left) taunts Tosh, a 3-year-old German Shepherd under control of Mike Lee, during demonstration for press