

## *Roggen and Coffee Bean's Story*



Eric and Roggen



Nicole and Coffee Bean

When we were asked to write about Coffee Bean, at first it seemed easiest to just contact the Sheriff's department and request the file maintained related to the work Coffee Bean has performed. This file documented her work, detailing the types and quantities of drugs that were recovered with her assistance, the search and rescue missions that she was dispatched to, as well as noting other, less common services that were provided: bomb detection, USDA inspections at DIA for customs, and evidence identification. There was more: the cost of dog food, veterinary care for emergencies, training expenses...the file was well organized yet it did not come close to adequately reflecting the wonderful dog Coffee Bean is in real life. So, her file was returned and we have chosen a different perspective to share with all of you.



Coffee Bean joined our family after being donated to a local sheriff's department to train as an avalanche rescue dog. This black beauty had all of the inherent wonderful qualities of Labrador Retrievers, resulting in everyone immediately taking a liking to her. Coffee Bean was smart, playful and observant. I recall clearly the first time Bean saw snow. Having been raised in sunny San Diego, California, Bean was not impressed and was NOT going to eliminate in the snow. This was our first encounter with her stoic, strong-willed nature that contributed to the numerous successes throughout Bean's career as a police dog.

Bean's role was to be an ambassador to the community and, when necessary, search avalanches for possible victims. This role was expanded once it was clear how well suited Bean was for police work. What amazed people, though, was Bean's ability to detect things for which she had not been formally trained. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings are common in our line of work, occurring after a search mission or other large incident. Coffee Bean (against the rules that all dogs must be leashed) worked the room during these debriefings, somehow knowing who needed unsolicited, non-judgmental extra attention. Bean identified individuals who had been most heavily involved in a situation and lingered with certain people who were most affected by the circumstances. Only recently was I told that the leaders conducting the debriefing kept a list of people who Bean spent more than a few minutes with so that additional counseling could be targeted towards them. At the end of all the work Bean had already done, she kept right on

working.

One of the more significant lessons learned from my experiences in search-and-rescue involved a search for a well-respected and well-liked emergency room physician at the Children's Hospital in Denver. This doctor did not show up for a scheduled shift at work, prompting his wife to contact the sheriff's office. Once his car was located in a parking lot, it was clear that this doctor had taken a free shuttle to one of several trailheads in the area and that we would need to search each of them. The State Search and Rescue Board put out a request for much needed manpower; this doctor's family and friends offered their time, money and support in an effort to locate him. As the morning dawned, a cell phone call was received by dispatch stating that an avalanche in the search area had been located with ski tracks going in with no exit signs. It was immediately clear what had happened. Since recent experiences had demonstrated that people can survive long periods of time in avalanche debris, Coffee Bean and I were flown on a Flight For Life helicopter to the scene of the avalanche.

Unfortunately, our efforts did not bring the desired news and we conveyed that the doctor had not survived the avalanche. It was clear over the course of this short search how much this person meant to his colleagues, friends, family and community. His wife requested that she be taken to the site where her husband had been found and I was assigned with another dog and handler team to arrange this. I had numerous concerns which were not limited to the idea that Coffee Bean and the other dog accepting this assignment were good friends and most likely were going to play and run with glee during the hike to the avalanche site. Sure that this was going to be disrespectful, I made every effort to decline this trek. My efforts to avoid this potentially difficult situation were met with a stern reprimand from my training director. The hike eventually occurred on a beautiful spring day with two dogs, two handlers and the victim's wife. With no direction from me, Coffee Bean led the man's wife to the exact location where he had been found and stayed with her until the wife was ready to return to the trailhead. I could not have asked for more. A significant donation was received subsequent to this search and, while the money was desperately needed, I would have rather had a different outcome altogether. No amount of money could ever replace what this wonderful person gave to those he knew and the importance of giving of oneself becomes even clear over time: life is a very, very precious commodity to be shared.



The majority of the training Coffee Bean and I received occurred before Oklahoma City, before Columbine and before 9/11. In an increasingly dangerous world, it was clear that each time Bean was dispatched, the possibilities that I would return home without her also increased. I became adamant that a "pet" be added to our family - a dog that was always going to come home, no matter what. Coffee Bean was bred and the results produced our wonderful dog Roggen.

Almost a year ago an attorney who serves on the Kempe Foundation for Children contacted me with great news. He wanted me to know that several local law enforcement agencies had agreed that, if an appropriately trained dog indicated that a child had been exposed to methamphetamines, that child could be taken immediately into protective custody. Coffee Bean, who is well known for her reliability, had contributed to a lengthy campaign during which we promoted dog searches as a basis for probable cause. Since a dog can immediately recognize and identify a specific substance, police officers were being given feedback which could otherwise take hours or days to obtain through more traditional methods. It is impossible to calculate how many children will benefit from this new practice, but it is a fabulous step in the right direction to protect children when protection is necessary.

A flyer at the Animal Crackers store announced that Denver Pet Partners was pre-screening dog and handler

teams to determine their potential for pet therapy work. After a year of effort, in October 2004, both Coffee Bean and Roggen completed the requirements for DPP, then the training to visit at Swedish Hospital.

---by Nicole; now its Eric's turn.

My version of the story begins back at the time that Coffee Bean was nearing the end of her working career. She had been a spectacular companion, yet there was not the lively interaction one might expect from a dog. She was more content to spend the afternoon on the sofa shifting her position to follow the afternoon sun, to later go for a walk in the hills. Nicole and I had discussed breeding her and keeping one of the puppies as a playmate. We did just that. August rolled around and I received a phone call "I need you home we are having puppies". My only question was "are you sure". I will leave it to your imagination the answer to that question. Bean had five puppies and only one girl in the litter. This girl was our little grind of Coffee Beans. This was to be my little girl. As with any new puppy there are things you have forgotten to expect, such as lots of cleaning up, chewed items, a level of energy, and what name to choose. We travel to and from Denver and Sidney, Nebraska on the weekends, and I-76 can be a lonely road with only stretches of wind and sky to fill the time. Towering out of the expanse of the high plains is a set of grain elevators contrasting against the backdrop of amber pastures. There



is the town of Roggen. As we struggled with creating an identity for the puppy, the name Roggen finally stuck. (By definition "Roggen" is named for a region in Germany where a spectacular dark rye grain is harvested) . Roggen was the runt of the litter. As the smallest puppy and the only girl, she was presented with many challenges. She was faced with keeping all the boys in line while not missing out on her own opportunities at feeding time. She also developed medical issues that needed to be addressed at nine weeks of age. It took three surgeries to repair her inverted intestines. As an owner handler you may have to face the question "How far will you go?" in reference to veterinary care. Yet having known Roggen for only a few short weeks it was obvious the extent of care was not in question. Finally happy and healthy together we started obedience training. There was a lot of time spent at home achieving the basics. Knowing that this was my puppy and we would have to compete on a daily basis with the likes of an incredibly well trained

Coffee Bean, the journey took us to other Denver facilities for advanced learning. Obedience wasn't enough! The two of us yearned to learn more. We also looked for something that would entertain the whole family. While Coffee Bean had dedicated retirement to keeping the sofa warm, Nicole and I had found a class for dogs called Beginner Agility. Since it is not good enough to just own a pet but you must take responsibility to interact with the animal, agility provided a great mix of handling abilities as well as the ability of the dog to be agile, speedy, and obedient, as they make their way through an array of obstacles. After completing the beginner course it was evident that Roggen excelled and Coffee Bean again was going to announce retirement.

Roggen and I spun off from Agility work to invest time in learning the art of upland hunting. She worked the fields and pastures like a pro. She excelled in moving gracefully back and forth venturing no further than an eyeshot away. Joyfully she went leaping and bounding over and under the heavy brush and weeds. After discovering that the first fields were an incredible expenditure of energy for such little return, Roggen made the decision to follow in my footsteps. Literally.

New Years Eve 2003 crept up on us as New Year's Eves do every year. Resolutions are a way to ante-up a decision that is by defacto, doomed to not be resolute. Yet Nicole and I made a commitment to find an organization to which we could donate and volunteer our time. Wouldn't it be excellent if we could include the dogs? The answer

came while shopping for Coffee Bean and Roggen.

We frequent local pet stores as we shop for dog consumables to sustain their very existence. Who would we be to the dogs if we didn't bring home the dinner? A flyer for a free pre-screening of your pet for pet therapy caught Nicole's attention. The gears in her head started churning. She made the phone calls, got all the details, and we showed up in the parking lot of the pet store across town for the free pre-screening a few weeks later. Incredibly intimidated, we made our way through the pre-screening." Sit your dog, down your dog. O.K. now heel the dog around the screening arena." Roggen kept her focus on me. She listened to all the commands and responded respectfully, politely, and with incredible enthusiasm. Our pre-screening was completed and the next dog was asked to come into the ring. Nervously we waited for the results. Not having any understanding of AAT/AAT, I had no idea what the pre-screening meant. A few moments later we received word that we had passed the screening and that Denver Pet Partners/Delta Society would really appreciate having Roggen and Coffee Beans pursue certification. The ball was rolling. We signed up for the certification class.



Meanwhile we were encouraged to get Roggen CGC certified. Knowing that she and I are inseparable I was skeptical that we would pass the down-stay. I fronted and downed Roggen, she responded with the same passion she showed the first time she learned this trick. I walked out of the room and waited. Five minutes came and went so slowly. Roggen boldly held her ground even with all the distractions. We walked in with her just a Good Dog and pranced out her being a Canine Good Citizen.

The rigorous process to certification qualifying her to visit at Swedish Hospital has been worth every moment spent. Roggen has visited over 500 patients, countless visitors and we don't really need say, but she is thrilled to dawn the bright green vest and work the floors. Now every time we pull around the corner and, Swedish is in sight, Roggen starts to pace between the car windows, and starts to cry in anticipation of the great times she will have.

Roggen continues to excel with her Dog Agility. She seems committed to attending class every week which she has done since she was one year old. She began competing in local agility events this spring and has titled in two categories. She has a paw full of "Q's" (Qualifiers) in several other categories as well. Roggen would like everyone to know that it isn't about winning, but it is all about the clean run and getting to socialize with all the other dogs.



Roggen can also be found in any of a number of Cabela's catalogs. As the World's Foremost Outfitter, Cabela's only uses top-notch talent. Her modeling career has been brief but has developed a stack of photo shots in her portfolio. Whether sporting a camouflage hunting vest, stretched out over a plush, plaid, Cabela's dog bed, in front of the fireplace with her mother on dueling dog beds, or standing in a pickup bed kennel, she makes the most of hamming it up for the camera.

Roggen and I truly remain humble about having the opportunity to partake in such a great organization as DPP and be aligned with a spectacular facility such as Swedish Hospital. Our visits to the hospital have enlightened and enriched our lives forever. Roggen has bonded with nurses and patients alike. She will never scoff at the hand which provides her biscuits!

---humbly yours, Eric (Now it is Nicole's turn again.)

Our volunteer work at Swedish has been a wonderful experience. Often I ponder who has benefited the most from our time there - the patients, the staff, Bean or me. The nursing staff often hears Coffee Bean's nails clicking on the floor and tags jingling on her collar seconds before her actual appearance at the nursing station where we check in. It doesn't take long before we can overhear from different patients and visitors that "the dog is here!" Because patients can stay on the multi-trauma unit for extended periods of time, we encounter many different circumstances including patients who are unable to speak, have difficulty moving and may be frustrated or depressed with the prospects of a long recovery. I am constantly amazed to hear that the same patients who resist other interaction will go to extreme lengths to see and pet Bean: asking for pads of paper and pens so that they can ask questions about the dog; moving furniture so that Bean can sit in a chair at their eye level; requesting assistance so that they can be in a position to pet Bean. Patients who may have been distant at other times are suddenly animated and excited to have such a special visitor.

Additionally, Bean and I are assigned to the Progressive Care Unit. One of our most memorable experiences started with an e-mail from another team member requesting we visit a particular patient early on our arrival. After locating the patient's room, the family informed me that the patient, their mother, was supposed to move to hospice care soon but they did not believe she would live through the night. Would it be possible for Coffee Bean to lay next to their mother on the bed? I was immediately thinking of how large Bean is, how frail the patient appeared, how this did not seem like a reasonable request. But the family persisted: their mother had been recently medicated and was suffering from an illness, not an injury. Very carefully, Bean was placed in a chair next to the bed, then directed to gently lay next to the patient. This patient, who had not demonstrated any other signs that she was aware of her circumstances, reached up to stroke Bean's head and cuddle with her. We spent a long evening with this family who proceeded to speak with their mother about all of the wonderful pets they had growing up and how much they appreciated all that their mother had done. After their mother drifted off to rest, the family repeatedly thanked me for the visit. This story ended the way it began, with an e-mail. The family thanked me, as well as the other teams who had visited, for providing one of the last opportunities to communicate with their mother. It meant a great deal, they said, as their mother was not otherwise responsive due to her heavy sedation, passing away the day after I visited with Bean. I know that both the patient and the family were beneficiaries of a program that is supported by a wonderful hospital and excellent volunteer organization.

Bean and I are fortunate to be affiliated with such a successful and rewarding program.

---Gratefully, Nicole (Now, Eric has the last word.)

I would like to finish this story by relating three special visits Roggen and I had. These three short stories express the wonderful opportunity we have to share ourselves and our dogs through Denver Pet Partners/Delta Society with the patients, visitors and the staff at Swedish Medical. It seems so long ago when Nicole and I made the resolution to give some of our free time to volunteering. Fortunately we were in coming across a flyer for free dog pre-screening for pet therapy work. Through this commitment we have opened our eyes and broadened our horizons.

The first story involves my thinking that Roggen didn't seem to show much interest in the trip to and from visiting at Swedish. I was getting the sense that working was a chore for her. This particular evening was not unlike any of the other trips. We started our visits on one of the two assigned floors. Signing in, grabbing the list of who to visit and watching the nurses dish out the biscuits to the cute little black Lab seemed as usual. I wondered if I should mention that all those treats could cause a lot of distraction for Roggen. We made our way onto the floor visiting the patients one after the other on the North wing. We approached the room at the end of the hall. Knocked, announced ourselves, and greeted by a kind gentleman, who said in a low, soft voice, "Come on in". Roggen and I did just that. We approached his bedside chatting as we went. The gentleman scooted himself up in the bed a bit so that he could drop his arm to pet her. Roggen positioned herself in a perfect location to get as much attention as she possibly could. The gentleman petted Roggen stroke after stroke as the conversation carried on. (My visits are in the evenings so it is not unusual for the patients to be sedated or fall asleep having tired from a long day.) A few minutes into the conversation he fell asleep, his arm went limp and all the monitors assessing his condition went flat. He had fallen asleep for the last time. The nurses were alerted and chaos ensued. Roggen and I bowed out of the room and went about the rest of our visits, as the list of persons to visit was only half completed. The background noise of the quiet hospital was rudely stirred with all the phones ringing, carts clattering down the hallway and the frantic calm in the nurses' voices. Only the visit with this gentleman stood out in my mind from that night. Looking back I realized the power of what we do for the patients, family and staff. It was a thrill to be able to bring such joy and calm to this gentleman through pet therapy.

My second story is one of improvising. Having signed in, grabbed the list and, of course, the nurses feeding Roggen biscuits at the front desk made me think I was in for a difficult time in regaining Roggen's attention since she was extremely focused on all the nurses. She seemed to think that every time a nurse passed a biscuit might be offered. Or, maybe the nurse walking into the room with the medicine might be coming in just for Roggen. In the next room visited Roggen saluted the nurse with all of her attention, tail wagging, sitting in such a perfect manner. Then Roggen seemed a bit disappointed to find out that the nurse wasn't there just for her. In the next room Roggen heard the jingle of the nurse's pocket. Roggen made a sudden 270° turn-about, pointing as if she is a great hunter. I apologized to the patient, explaining that the nurses had possibly been having a bad day and had received great joy by rewarding Roggen with biscuits just being on the floor. (Of course I won't deny anyone sharing the joy Roggen carries with her.) Yet two or three rooms later I knew something had to be done. The visits had to be modified in some way so I could recapture her attention. Bingo! I could have her do tricks. Roggen really doesn't know that many but it would get her refocused on me and the patient. I had her sit, down, settle on her side, roll-over, spin around, shake, shake with the other hand and now whisper. I could see out of the corner of my eye that people in the room across the hall were watching. "Now whisper" I commanded. She did a low woof that was more the movement of a bark than any sound itself. By this time I had every one's attention. The people from across the hall, visitors that were walking by, and some of the nursing staff had all become spectators. The word was spreading "you have to check this out". We went through the routine again and again, each time ending with a whisper.

There was the appearance of a party. Everyone was laughing and having a great time. Meanwhile, Nicole and Bean had finished their floors early that evening so they came on up to help me finish my visits. When she asked the nurses at the nurse station if they knew where I was they pointed to the crowd at the end of the hall. "You'll

just have to check it out"! She just shook her head in disbelief. All of the noise was indicative of a full-blown party! I am not sure what, if any, rules were broken that evening but everyone came away with a story to tell and a great big smile. I learned that you must improvise to make the most of every situation. Roggen and I did just that and she got the attention and biscuits she was craving.

My last story is about a rare opportunity to visit pediatrics. It is not common for Swedish to have children we can visit, so we were glad to take on this endeavor. The nurses had forewarned me that this little girl had experienced a longer than expected stay and her treatment was starting to wear down her enthusiasm. We were surely not expecting the reception we received. "A dog! A dog!" she exclaimed, smiling ear to ear. Within seconds, she was arranging all of her IV lines and tubes so she could zip out of bed. I don't believe she even noticed I was there; she had stories to share with Roggen! "The nurses were friendly, the food, well, not so good, would Roggen like to hear a story? Share her toys? Share her dinner?" This girl sat on the floor with Roggen for more than an hour, happily chatting away, sharing her dreams and hopes with a little black Lab who gently wagged her tail in response. The patient's parents were stunned with how animated their very sick daughter could be. It was clearly past bed time and I tried to excuse myself several times. Finally, the little girl fell asleep on the floor curled up next to Roggen and had to be lifted back into bed. Everyone agreed it was well worth every moment, it was wonderful to see this child smile and act like a child, regardless of how sick she was.

---And that is the end of our story. Thank you, Eric and Roggen (and Nicole and Coffee Bean)

