

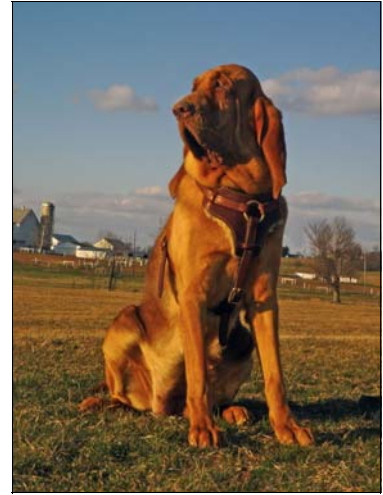
# “Nellie”

by Patti Means

“Heather Knock Knock It’s Nellie” – MTX

CKC Reg. RC996375  
AKC Reg. HP16876402

February 15, 2005 – June 16, 2009



“*Tit Mouse*” – that’s what Heather and Peter Whitcomb named her.

She was the smallest pup in the litter from “Knotty” (Ch. Heathers Knock on Wood) and “Triumph” (Ch. Quietcrk Triumph for Heather) in February of 2005. In the beginning of May that year, my husband, Al, and I packed our Suburban and headed north for Thetford Mines in the Province of Quebec, Canada to pick up our little “*Tit Mouse*” that we named “*Nellie*”.

Nellie had more skin about her face than we had ever seen before. She was beautiful, a liver and tan and she felt like velvet. We brought her home to our farm in Strasburg, Pennsylvania where she soon became the center of attention among our family, friends, and our senior Bloodhounds, Beau, Shooter, and Bailey. She was the fourth Bloodhound I had the pleasure of training.

For the first year, Nellie lived in our farmhouse with us and enjoyed lounging on the couch in front of the fireplace. Her lips draped over the armrest as she slept. She was an incredibly sound sleeper and was the first hound we had that consistently slept on her back with all four legs in the air. She was very relaxed and took the world at her own pace. Once summertime arrived, her lounging took place on a raft in our pool where she would often doze off as she floated on by.

Socialization for Nellie came naturally as she met everyone in the grocery store, the hardware store, the pharmacy, and the ice cream shop! She loved being a part of the children’s basic survival program we presented to children and welcomed all the hugs and kisses she could get.

At 10 weeks of age, we introduced her working harness to her and that marked the beginning of her life-long training process of trailing human scent. Nellie was a quick study and we were amazed at how fast she caught on to the wonderful world of trailing. At this point, I have to mention that Nellie was originally going to be trained by Al since he had lost his faithful 10 ½ year old partner, Hannah.

That September, Al was asked to instruct at the Old Dominion K-9 Training Seminar in Appomattox, Virginia. Since Nellie was seven months of age and doing so well with her training, we decided to take her to the seminar, so while Al was instructing, I trained Nellie. One day, we worked on negative scent articles and I had never attempted this with Nellie but I quickly discovered her keen sense and quick reaction to a “negative” scent article. I was blown away! It was something I had never seen before in a pup. Throughout that week, I worked with her on this exercise and she soon became “text book” for consistently and positively identifying a “negative” scent article. This was a unique skill that we later utilized in many call-outs that were later confirmed. The members in our training group soon crowned her “*Negative Nellie*”.

Needless to say that after that week of training, Nellie and I had formed a very strong bond and I continued to train her.

The abundance of skin that enfolded Nellie's face made her comical. I know in my heart that her God-given traits helped her to be the best man-trailer she could be. The mass of dewlaps about her face made it difficult for her to work sometimes. It was not uncommon that she would run her head into telephone poles, concrete pillars, car bumpers, and trees. I tried my hardest to over-compensate when I'd see something in her way but she always made the connection – head on! Our training group thought she should be fitted for a little pink hard hat for her run-ins.

Nellie's training rapidly progressed and the trails she worked were solid and consistent. Within her eighth month, she was called upon to work her first criminal case – the shooting of a police officer in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Police were serving a warrant on a known felon when he took off in his truck and led them on a chase to the driveway of his home where, from his vehicle, shot one of the officers and fled his vehicle. It was not known if he ran around the back of his home and entered from the patio door. A police tracking dog was first called to the scene and the handler determined that the felon was still in his house. All of the homes in close proximity were immediately evacuated and SWAT members were positioned to target every door and window. After about a two-hour stand-off, the police chief in charge requested the assistance of our Bloodhounds for confirmation before they made entry. It was Nellie's turn to step-up to the plate when she quickly determined a direction of travel behind the house, through the backside of the development, to the main highway where she crossed and indicated "end of trail" beside a service station – indicating that the suspect was picked up in a vehicle. It was later confirmed by police that the felon's aunt picked him up and drove him to a friend's farm in the southern part of Lancaster County. After receiving a tip, multiple police agencies converged on the farm. The felon appeared in a field with his gun drawn and he was fatally shot. Thankfully, the injured officer survived the ordeal and later returned to work several months later.

Nellie participated in the American Bloodhound Club trailing trials and is known to us to be the youngest Bloodhound to have ever achieved the Mantrailing Excellent certification at 1 ½ years of age. When we learned that Knotty was entered into the Stud Dog Hall of Fame, we were told that both his daughters: Nellie and her half-sister Heather ("Heathers Scent of a Mystery"-MTX) which Al trains, helped to contribute to this impressive accomplishment through the working points they achieved. We were very proud of our girls.

Nellie attended the Virginia Bloodhound Search & Rescue Summer Seminar in Aldie, Virginia (VBSAR) where she trained with some of the best long-time Bloodhound handlers we have ever met. Their abundance of knowledge and years of experience are something that we greatly respect. It has been an honor to work with and learn from these legends. We will always be grateful for their resources but most importantly, the lasting friendships we've made.

As Nellie's training progressed, I continued to watch in amazement as she worked through difficult problems and contamination along the way. She completed each of her assigned tasks with ease and did it in a graceful and effortless manner. Her accuracy became comforting and my trust in her far surpassed the working relationship I had developed with the prior three Bloodhounds I had trained. It was a feeling that was hard to describe. It was as if we were one, working in sync, with ease, and a mutual understanding.

A smile comes to my face when I think about all the early morning hours that Al and I had to scramble and respond to call-outs. Once we got our boots on and were running out the door, one of us would drive our "Dogulance" down the driveway so that we could load the dogs from their kennels. Inevitably, Al would go into the kennel, flip on the lights, and quickly try to get the hounds awake - not Nellie! She could be found flat on her back with all four legs in the air and her flappy face off to the side, gazing up at her daddy! "Hey! What's going on?" From the driveway, I could hear Al yelling "NELLIE!!! C'MON! C'MON! GET UP!!!" She hated getting up but once she got moving – she was all paw drive!

In one case, the PA State Police contacted us to help track down a DUI suspect who had collided with an Amish horse and buggy and fled on foot. Witnesses said they saw a car run into the rear of a horse and buggy, pulled off to the side of the road, and fled on foot. The Amish man was uninjured. Upon our arrival, one of the men was apprehended. The trooper in charge wanted to know if the man they had in custody was the driver or the passenger. Neither Al nor I had seen the man who was in the back of one of the police cars. The decision was made to set up a line-up in a nearby farm field approximately two miles from the crash scene. I was told later that the police used some of the on-lookers as well as the suspect. I obtained a scent article from the driver's seat and waited to be contacted. A trooper escorted me to the line-up and asked that Nellie be scented to see if she could identify the person in question. I presented the scent article to her and she locked her head on the ground and pulled without any hesitation to one man. She jumped up on him and remained there. He began yelling that he was not the driver among other expletives! We were thanked by the PSP and returned home.

The next morning, I spoke with the officer in charge and asked him how he made out with the situation. He replied, "GREAT!" I asked him to elaborate and he was happy to say that as he drove the suspect back to the police barracks, the inebriated man kept asking, "What was up with that dog?" "Why was she jumping on me?" The trooper said in a stern voice: "That's a Bloodhound and whatever she says – that's what happened – and she's saying you were the driver!" It wasn't until the trooper parked his car at the barracks when the man in the back seat started to cry and said, "OK! I was the driver!" The trooper just kept laughing and thanking us for our service.

In another case, Nellie was instrumental in the prosecution of a man who was wanted for a continuing crime spree but kept eluding police. This man tried breaking into a home late one night and we were called to assist. I scented Nellie on the windowsill that he tried climbing through, and we trailed him throughout a large development where Nellie discovered other homes that the suspect had tried to break into. Approximately 45 minutes into the trail, we approached a cornfield and worked between the outside row and the roadway. At the bottom of the hill, there was a police car parked with the rear passenger side door open. Nellie continued working down the hill and right up to the open car door where a man was sitting in handcuffs. Nellie stuck her head in the car and we were both blind-sided by the potent smell of liquor on his person. From past experiences with inebriated individuals – Nellie hated that smell and she quickly turned to me and jumped on me. At the same time, the man started screaming at us! That was my first encounter with a violent subject.

Before I removed Nellie's harness, I was asked by one of the officers if Nellie could tell me if that man's scent was anywhere on the other side of the road. I walked her to the other side of the road and told her "Get to work!" She quickly moved across the front lawn of an Amish farm, down the driveway to a barn, around the barn to a 1,000 gal. propane tank, over to a daylight basement, around to the side of the house to where we located a window screen laying in the flower garden.

She smelled all around the screen and then turned and moved through the side yard up onto the road again and right around to the rear passenger side door of the police car. The officer in charge was writing everything down as we moved about the Amish farm.

We were then informed that as we were working the original trail, the police saw this man wandering through a nearby field so they quickly apprehended him. They determined that he had cut the propane gas line and shoved it into the daylight basement window where the gas began to fill the Amish home. He tried to climb into a bedroom window when the Amish couple heard the noise and yelled at him. He immediately ran away from the house. The Amish man smelled the gas and ran to the tank to turn it off. If the gas lanterns in the home would have been ignited, the entire home would have exploded. The couple had one small child. Nellie was able to link the location of the first break-in to the Amish farm which was a critical connection the police needed. The suspect in this case received 40 years in prison for several felony crimes and in particular, this case for "Risking a Catastrophic Event".

In January of this year, we responded to a call at French Creek State Park in Chester County, PA for two missing hikers. We arrived at 2:00 a.m. in the thick of darkness and were taken to the hikers' truck to obtain a scent article. As I obtained my scent article from the driver's seat, I was looking at the vast woodland surrounding us and thinking of the irony of the phrase "Looking for a needle in a haystack!" Through investigative work by the Park Rangers, they determined the identity of the hikers – college students – a young male and female in their 20's. The temperature was cold and the weather clear. Calmly, I began to replay in my mind, everything I had ever been taught as a Bloodhound handler because that night – every minute I was going to be working with Nellie could mean the difference between life and death.

I walked Nellie around a large perimeter near the hikers' truck and then began our ritual of suiting her with her harness, presenting the scent article to her, and giving her the command "TRACK!" Off she went and I followed right behind her keeping the lead tight in my hands. As we approached roadways, I leaned back to let her check herself and once she made her decision, we again began to trail. As we approached the thick wooded area, there were several intersecting trails. Each one was approached in the same manner, allowing Nellie to work as she pleased and I continued to keep the lead taut and my attention sharp. Her decisions were deliberate and her pace was solid. We trailed for approximately ¾ of a mile when the Park Ranger said he thought he saw a dim light in the distance. I told Nellie to "get to work" and we proceeded up the mountain for a short distance when, again, the Park Ranger stopped us and began to yell! As I looked upward, I could see a dim light from time to time. Within the next 15 minutes, we were approaching the two hikers and I called out to them to ask them if they were OK and if so – would they mind if Nellie made her connection with the person she was trailing. They stood still while Nellie smelled both of them and then she turned and jumped up on the young man. He was her target – he was the driver! The hikers were disoriented and cold but alive and well. I praised Nellie and she knew she had done a good job. This was a memorable time for me, as I felt as though I could read Nellie's body language without a doubt, from beginning to end, and together – we did it as a team. We helped to find someone in need and can feel proud that we succeeded.

It was then that I remembered a very important story I had heard from my first VBSAR instructor, Buck Garner, about learning to read a Bloodhound. Buck said that when you first begin training a Bloodhound, it's very much like learning how to read a book for the first time. At first, you learn to read individual words. Soon thereafter, you begin to put those words into sentences. The sentences soon become paragraphs and paragraphs become chapters. Buck explained that each one of these reading accomplishments could be equated with the slow methodical training of a Bloodhound. It might take someone as long as having to train two or three hounds until you are finally able to reach that last chapter and close the book. It's only at that time, that you will be able to put the book down and say with confidence that you fully comprehend what you were reading.

Every Bloodhound handler has their own personal, ultimate goal and they continue to reach it every time they work with their beloved partner. I know only too well, now, what Buck meant. His analogy came full circle for me and it finally made complete sense. Nellie and I were truly partners, working together every step of the way. I was able to read her like a book and understand every word. It was a unique feeling that I had never known before and one that from this day forward, always strive to achieve.

On June 16<sup>th</sup> of this year, I said goodbye to my beloved partner. Her life ended - so premature. Our work together as a team suddenly ceased. Her harness and lead hang on her crate in the "Dogulance". She is buried in our pasture at the highest point of our property, overlooking the valley with the rest of our Bloodhound family. They are all together again. Our hearts ache. Her loss was felt throughout our community. Police officers ask for her and children wonder where she is, so we calmly tell them that her work is now complete. Her love and spirit for trailing will live inside me as I begin training my next puppy. Her endearing memories will forever fill our hearts with happiness and inspire us to be the best that she was.....  
our little "Tit Mouse" - our "Nellie".



*“Nellie, thank you for the immense joy you poured into our lives.  
We thank God for your existence. You were unique. You are gravely missed.  
Our trails will cross again and until then, may you rest in peace. We love you.”*

\* \* \*

Handled by: *Patti Means*

Owned and Greatly Loved by: *Allen & Patti Means, Red Rose K-9 S.A.R. Team*

Bred and Gently Nursed by: *Heather & Peter Whitcomb*

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*It is said that animals live without a soul and that a soul is left for man. What other species has conscious thoughts and reasoning and has the capability for love, sadness, remorse, memory and forgiveness. There was time in man's history where there existed a void. Not filled by a love-mate so the Lord looked over all the species he had created and came upon the canine and he spoke to them:*

*"You will leave your wild ways and lay down by the fires of man there you will help him through life by your service you will give him unconditional love even through you may be slighted by him on occasion. You will continue to love him showing no remorse or anger towards him. You will share in his happiness and sorrow and even though you may remember bad times living with him you will continue to show love, forgiveness, and understanding."*

*Since that time so long ago the ancestors of the first canine has been with us, our unquestionable companions giving us love and forgiveness and sharing their soul.*

*You will see your partner once again. Dan Senger (Instructor & Friend)*



*It is the hound that makes the handler. We are only students that great dogs have chosen to teach, and they never quit teaching us – even after they have gone. Our best memories are those of our most honored friends, even though they may not be human.*

**Buck Garner (Instructor & Friend)**



“Triumph”



“Nellie”




“Knotty”





# Lititz cop wounded; suspect shot, killed



Police with dogs cross in front of traffic today on Route 501 at Heron Drive while searching for a shooting suspect.

Richard Hertzler/New Era

By [unreadable]

This news article features a headline and a photograph showing police officers with dogs on a street. The photo shows several officers in dark uniforms and helmets, some with dogs on leashes, standing in front of a white car. A dog is running across the street in the foreground. The background shows a street with other cars and buildings.

