



WWII Dive Bomber Crash

John Grebenkemper and Adela Morris

In January 1944, a squadron of Dauntless Dive-Bombers was on a training flight near Watsonville. At 10,000', one of the planes developed mechanical problems, caught on fire and crashed south of the Pajaro River. The Navy reported that the bodies of the two-crew members were recovered. However, crash investigations during WWII were cursory due to the large number of crashes during training missions.

In July 2007, the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency was digging a trench for a new irrigation system. The backhoe encountered some metal that appeared to be part of an airplane. The Agency stopped the digging and hired Pacific Legacy to conduct an archaeological investigation. As part of their investigation, Pacific Legacy engaged the Institute for Canine Forensics to bring in dogs certified to find historical human remains to look for the remains of the pilot and the gunner.



ICF surveyed the site on two different days in August. The site is located about 100m southeast of the Pajaro Rive and about 1 km from the coast. In both surveys, the dogs indicated the presence of human remains despite what the Navy said about recovering the bodies. On the second day of surveying, the spots that the dogs alerted were flagged and the archaeologist would dig at those locations. These flagged locations resulted in the recovery of numerous human bones, including a finger bone with a ring on it.

Update: Family members of both the pilot and gunner have been located and contacted about the discovery of the plane and human remains that were recovered. The Water Company is planning on making a memorial placard to dedicate this site in honor of the 2 lost airman.

Jack alerting on the dirt taken out of the trench



Maya and James



Kris and Osara, Sal as flanker



Rhea working inside of the trench that is filling with water



The ring and finger bone that the dogs found

RESOLUTION BY THE PAJARO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

DATE: September 13, 2007
MEETING OF: September 19, 2007
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: General Manager
RE: **ACTION ITEM 5B:** Approve Resolution 2007-17, Expressing Appreciation to the Institute of Canine Forensics and historical human remain detection dogs Rhea, Remie, Maya, Osara, Jack, Annika, Tali, and Shiloh

BACKGROUND

On approximately July 3, 2007, remains of an aircraft were discovered while Mountain Cascade, Inc., the Agency's construction contractor, was excavating a trench for the H line of the Agency's Coastal Distribution System Project. Preliminary examination of the aircraft crash site established that it was of a Navy bomber that crashed in 1944. Because this had occurred more than 50 years ago, it became potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and triggered local, state and federal legal provisions pertaining to the unanticipated discovery of cultural resources.

The Agency quickly engaged Pacific Legacy, Inc., which had earlier in 199__assisted the Agency during the construction of the Harkins Slough project when remains of Native Americans were discovered, to help the Agency determine the historical significant of the remains and to provide the information to permit the Agency to comply with all applicable legal requirements;

During this process, the Institute for Canine Forensics, a non-profit organization based in Woodside, California for the advancement of research and education of Forensic Evidence and Human Remains Detection Dog teams, volunteered their specialized cadaver dog teams to assist in the detection of potential human remains at the aircraft crash site;

The Agency was pleased to allow the following certified handler and dog teams to travel to the crash site on several occasions to participate in the search for potential human remains: James Davidson and Maya; Kris Black and Osara; Adela Morrris and Rhea; and Ann Anderson and Jack. Additionally, the following handler and dog teams in training also traveled to the crash site on several occasions to participate in the search for potential human remains: Shirley Hammond and Remie; Sal Esposito and Annika; John Grebenkember and Tali; Tom Pomeroy and Shiloh; and Patti O'Neill.

Rhea, Remie, Maya, Osara, Jack, Annika, Tali and Shiloh, are only eight of twelve dogs in the world that are especially and uniquely trained in historical human remains detection. During their time at the aircraft crash site, they displayed their amazing skills by alerting their handlers to numerous locations at the aircraft crash site that contained the human remains and other personal effects of the pilot and the gunner. Their biographies and accomplishments are attached as Exhibit A to Resolution 2007-17.

Staff would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Institute for Canine Forensics in volunteering its time and resources and more importantly, pay tribute to the amazing dogs for their devotion and service to human.

FISCAL IMPACT - None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION - That the Board approve Resolution 2007-17

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution 200717 Expressing Appreciation to the Institute of Canine Forensics and Historical human remains detection dogs Rhea, Remie, Maya, Osara, Jack, Annika, Tali, and Shiloh
- Biographies and accomplishments of the historical human remain detection dogs