

# In Memoriam

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*By Lizanne Kaiser, May 2017*

Earlier this month we sadly had to say goodbye to our dear, sweet boy Dante (OTCH Dante's Vita Nuova UDX7 OGM GN GO VER CGC TDX), who passed away at 8.5 years old due to complications related to Degenerative Myelopathy (DM, the doggie form of ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease). We adopted Dante at 6 months old from Greater CA German Shepherd Rescue, who pulled him from the Modesto / Stanislaus County animal shelter. Dante is the sixth German Shepherd Dog (GSD) we've had. During his lifetime, he shared our home with our 'pack'—Quinn, Mika, and Eli.

Dante was a natural athlete and true competitor. He was my teammate in American Kennel Club (AKC) Obedience and Tracking. In 2012, Dante was the first (and only) rescue dog to win the German Shepherd Dog Club of America Obedience Victor (OV) award. Dante was also the Top Scoring Obedience GSD that year. In 2012 and 2013 he was invited to compete at the AKC National Obedience Invitational (NOI), and finished in the top 20 dogs nationally. In 2013, he completed his Obedience Trial Champion (OTCH) title, and in 2015, he became the third GSD ever to earn an Obedience Grand Master (OGM). From 2014 - 2017 he served as my 'demo dog', helping me teach dog obedience classes to others at Oakland Dog Training Club.

In 2013, Dante also began scent tracking. Although he came to this sport relatively late in life, Dante truly loved and excelled at Tracking. In 2014, he earned his Tracking Dog title (TD, beginning field tracking). Then his Tracking and Obedience training were unexpectedly put on hold for a couple of months while Dante recuperated from two separate surgeries (for stomach bloat/torsion, and then a mouth injury requiring stitches). In 2015, we returned to Tracking, and he successfully passed Tracking Dog Excellent (TDX, advanced field tracking). Since then, we had been training for and attempting to earn our Variable Surface Tracking (VST, advanced urban tracking) title, when Dante began to show symptoms of DM this past winter.

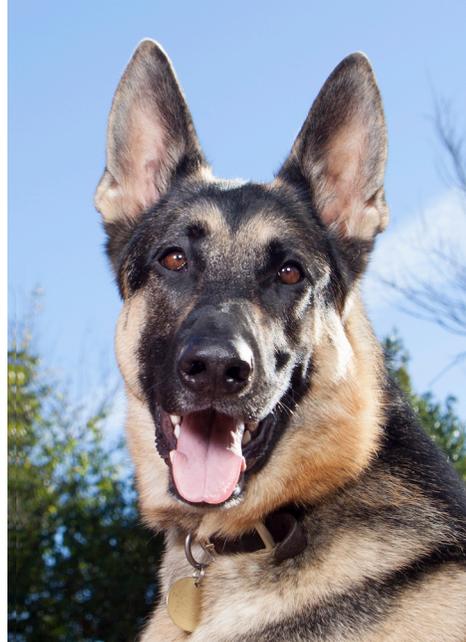
I learned many things during my Obedience and Tracking career with Dante:

- The OTCH taught us Control and Precision.
- The OGM taught us Reliability and Endurance.
- Tracking taught us Trust and Teamwork.

Most importantly, Dante taught me to 'Accept Loss with Grace.' As many times as we won ribbons, titles and awards, many more times than that we didn't qualify and failed. There were times when we were denied awards, simply on account of Dante being a rescue dog (a long story there...). Other times, we had to overcome injuries or illness to rebuild Dante into peak competitive form again. No matter what the challenge, Dante always gave me his all, until one day he no longer could.

I know I will never have another dog quite like Dante. He was a magnificent, irreplaceable dog. He is no longer with us, but he will always be with me. And I will share what he has taught me with my next dog.

A special 'thank you' to Greater CA German Shepherd Rescue, Miz Pierson, John and Kim Donald, Barbara Henry, Debi Best, Lynn Kosmakos, Hazel Olbrich, and our many friends at Oakland Dog Training Club—for rescuing Dante and for all the years of instruction, coaching, encouragement, care, and friendship you've shared with us along our journey.



**Dante**

(photo courtesy of J. Michael Tucker)