

*The year 1985 marks the 50th anniversary of the Force's Police Dog Services program. Canine units have played an increasingly active role in law enforcement since the program's inception in 1935.*

*The article that follows traces the history and developments of the Police Dog Services (P.D.S.) program from its modest beginnings to what it is today — a vital tool in crime detection, prevention, and public safety.*

## **HISTORY — The Formative Years**

Canadian police forces have used dogs for tracking since the early 1900s, and for transportation since the 1890s. However, the use of dogs in the realm of law enforcement in this country did not begin until 1930. This marked the beginnings of what has been called the "Informal Era."<sup>1</sup>

This era began with Sgt. John N. Cawsey of the Alberta Provincial Police (A.P.P.) who used his own dogs to assist him on his patrols. When the A.P.P. was absorbed by the RCMP on April 1, 1932, Sgt. Cawsey became a member of the Force. He remained in Alberta

("K" Division) and continued to patrol with dogs. In 1933 he acquired a German shepherd he named Dale of Cawsalta ("Caws" for Cawsey, "alta" for Alberta). This remarkable team conducted many successful investigations between 1933 and mid-1935.

The results of their investigations were not, however, initially accepted by the courts. On November 3, 1933, under poor weather conditions, Dale successfully tracked a car thief from the abandoned vehicle to a deserted shack five miles away. The thief was apprehended, but the RCMP's attempt to enter tracking evidence in court for the first time was unsuccessful; for the judge declared that canine-tracking evidence was inadmissible because of a precedent set in the landmark case of *Rex vs. White* (1926 W.W.R. 481).<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, evidence obtained through the use of dogs, as corroborative to other facts presented in a case, steadily gained acceptance, and in 1940 the Force won its first case involving the search evidence of P.S.D. Black Lux, who had found a hidden liquor cache. It took until 1962, however, for a Canadian court to formally rule in favour of admitting tracking evidence

**"The Silent Partner," Dale of Cawsalta.**



1. Samuel G. Chapman, "The Law on a Leash in Canada," *RCMP Quarterly* Vol. 49 #1, Winter 1984, p. 16. Professor Chapman identifies two separate, distinct eras of police service dog history in Canada. The Informal Era, from 1930 to 1935, and the Formal Era, which began in 1935 and continues today.
2. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Police Dog Service*, RCMP: Public Relations Branch, 1980, p. 3, and J. F. Thrasher, "Tracking by Dogs: Admissibility of Evidence in Criminal Law," *RCMP Quarterly* Vol. 6 #4, April 1939, pp. 259-271.