



Spirit Ridge



www.spiritridge.net

519-855-6962

'.. because sit happens!'

**Bellsha Boraë's Kiss Me "Koukla"
(1998-2011)**



Spirit Ridge has lost it's ROCK.

After a very brief period of discomfort, we said goodbye to our precious "Koukla" on October 27, 2011.

Bellsha Boraë's Kiss Me "Koukla" was born June 15, 1998. Contrary to general belief, she was NOT named after the trio "Koukla, Fran and Ollie"! Her name translates to "doll" in Greek.

And oh what a doll she was throughout her life.

From the get go, she was NOT our first selection from the three pup litter she came from. She was the 'compromise' puppy, the one that neither my wife nor I had initially chosen. "Koukla" was the farthest from a 'compromise' than anyone could get and she proceeded to show us this throughout her long life!



From the lanky puppy, she grew up to be a beautiful girl – her first public appearance in media coming at the age of 4 when she adorned the front cover of a Toronto dog fanciers' magazine at the time (photo at the top of previous page).



From the get go, this beautiful black baby was determined to deal with this world in her own way. Uncompromising, wise beyond her age, bomb-proof, the benevolent ruler of our pack of Mals that she ruled with an 'iron paw', she was the glue that held rescues and puppies together. My right hand girl and teacher of countless puppy classes and the helper for many a shy dog that refused to come out of their shell. I routinely tethered young dogs to her and had her 'walk them' to improve their confidence and demeanour.

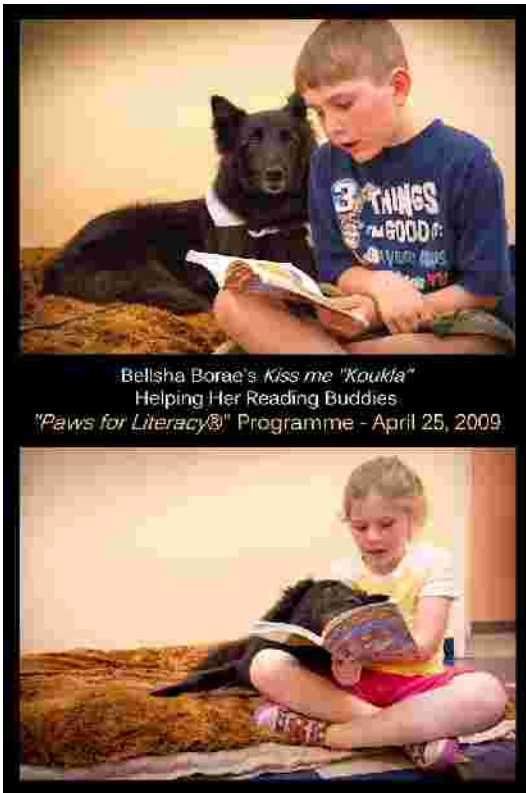
She was NEVER much for Obedience - she was only able to get one leg of her CD - and that barely with a 70.5/100 score - leading the judge to exclaim during the award that "if she had so much as passed gas, I would not have passed her"! In her younger days, she dabbled in schutzhund and, if it were not for the Tracking and Obedience (not a big fan) she would have excelled! Her bitework was beautiful and she loved to hit the sleeve and helper with all of her 50 lbs of weight. In schutzhund class, she earned the nickname of "Mojito" due to her light weight!

But OH HOW SHE KNEW, SENSED AND UNDERSTOOD HUMANS! This girl had other ideas and plans in store for us and her life.



At the age of 5 she embarked on a different career - one that would highlight and tap into her essence. She was successfully certified a Therapy Dog through Therapeutic Paws of Canada and proceeded to spread joy amongst the seniors and infirm - with a very special affinity to the Alzheimer's patients' ward.

An anecdote from her nursing home days highlights her affinity and comforting nature of her presence: During one of her visits in the Alzheimer's wing, unbeknownst to us, there was a resident of Belgian decent, who had been a doctor. The nursing home had a scheduled fire alarm drill - which, apparently, had always sent this lady into a tailspin every time - so much that one of the staff was there to help calm her down. This time, we happened to be visiting her when this happened at which point, she grabbed Koukla, held her tight and close to her body and yelled, 'the Nazis are coming, the Nazis are coming ... but that's OK, the Belgian will save us, the Belgian will help us get away!!'. Needless to say, Koukla stood still and absorbed it all - reflecting back calmness and comfort. I will NEVER forget this incident which, 8 years later is as vivid in my mind as ever.



Her crowning achievement came in 2009 at the age of 10 when we embarked on a literacy programme designed to encourage reading amongst children in our community. Our 100% volunteer, community-based, non profit literacy programme - "Paws for Literacy"

(<http://www.spiritridge.net/Paws%20for%20Literacy.htm>) - was launched with Koukla spearheading a group of 7 other pre-screened dogs. Koukla headed this group up until our last event on October 1st at a library in our County. To catch a glimpse of our Koukla (plus our Mal "Jesse" who has been gradually taking over the duties) please follow this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/SpiritRidge2011#p/a/u/0/x7MkkPzNEfM>. Koukla has managed to have her own 'posse' of young fans who tripped over each other when it came to reading to Koukla! Our "Paws for Literacy" programme has lost its founding member and ambassador. A presence like this is just impossible to replace.

(picture courtesy of Illona Haus, Scruffy Dog Photography, <http://www.scruffydogphotography.com>)

Last year and at the age of 12, Koukla got to see sheep for the first time in her life! She was brilliant, engaged, biddable and absolutely LOVED it - earning her Herding Instinct title. Had we not lived 'in the city' for most of her earlier years, we may have had a herding champion on our hands! Still, we were happy to have her test out her prowess in the herding arena.



Thirteen years of a full and fulfilled life have left us with a plethora of memories. It is far too difficult (and unfair) to try and capture the 'essence' of our 'Koukla' in a few pages.

Alas, on October 27th, 2011, Koukla told me it was time. She was ready to go. We made the appt at the vet's office and, after confirming that it was time, I took her for a last stroll through the library next door where she had helped countless children improve their reading skills. She had a chance to walk around in the library, flirt with whatever energy she had left and say goodbye to all the staff. Then, shortly thereafter, in our arms and comforted till the last, we said goodbye to each other – peacefully and very quickly.

She left with a message from us to all of our previous friends that are waiting at the Rainbow Bridge we know she will execute her last mission faithfully and deliver the message of love.

Suffice it to say that the human race is just a little bit poorer for having lost such an advocate, tireless worker and friend.

While time will heal the selfish pain and grief we feel, it will **never** erase the beautiful, long lasting memories of this beautiful, charismatic, intuitive Belgian Shepherd Dog.

Gone at the age of 13 years and 4 months, our "Koukla", our rock, our 'go to' girl .. she never had time to suffer and she had a **GREAT** life full of experiences and challenges that fulfill a dog's life.

Enjoy the select pictures below of our "Koukla" – a tribute to one very special working dog!

Jim Tsitanidis
K9 Trainer & Behavioural Consultant



Poor "Koukla" enduring the humiliation of being "dressed up" by Mrs. Spirit Ridge!!! (2002)

*In Shutzhund Obedience training – 2004
(4th in line)*

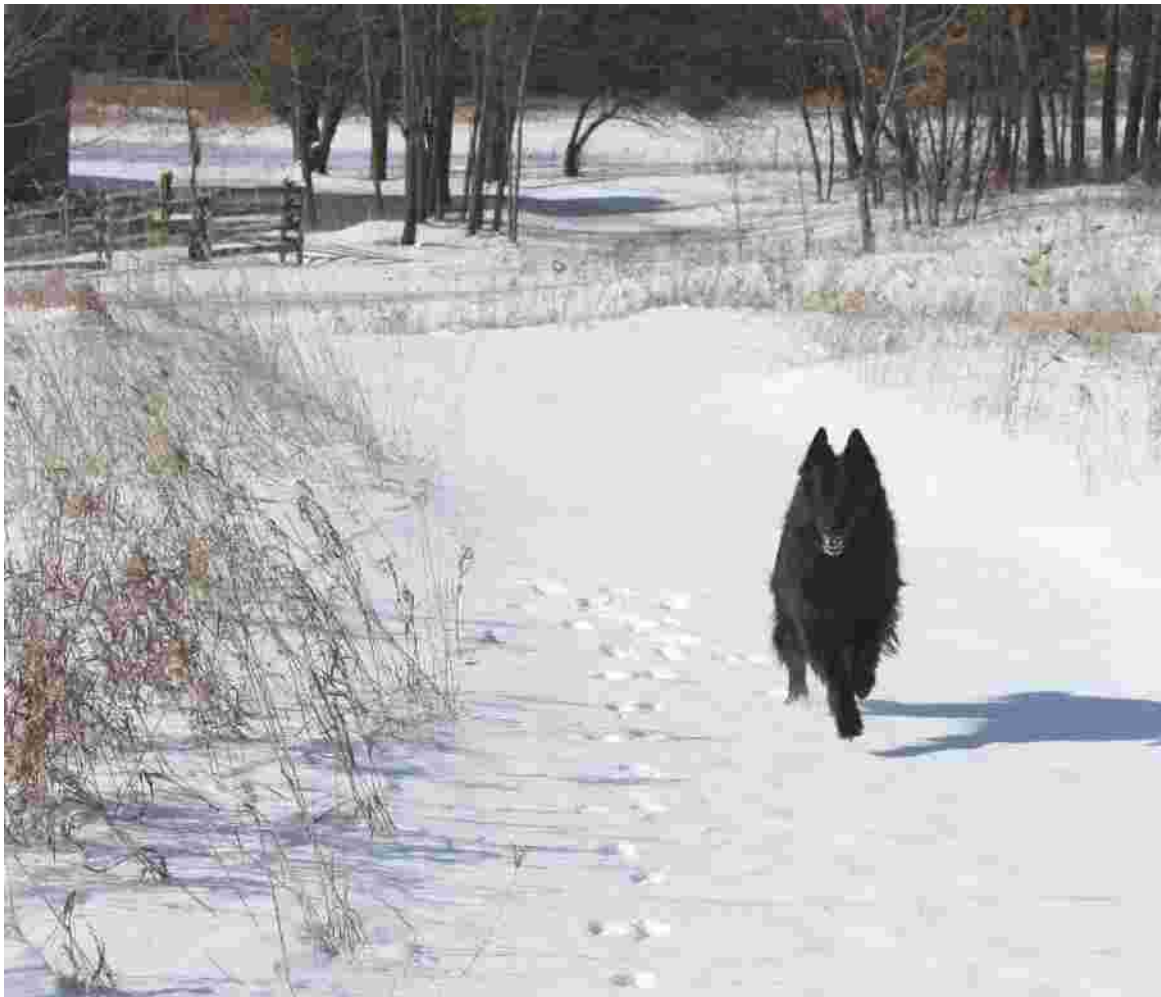




Koukla's last public outing – Canadian Thanksgiving 2011 (Oct. 10, 2011)



The Spirit Ridge pack in early June 2011 (since then, we have also lost our "Tequila" (back left))



"Koukla" booting it as any 12 year could! Having fun at "the Ridge" – winter 2010