

Decorated police dog dies

CAMDEN (AP) — Max, a decorated Camden County police dog who found hundreds of pounds of drugs and helped authorities solve two murders during an 11-year career, has died.

The tan German shepherd, the first police dog in the Camden County Sheriff's Department, died from cardiac arrest on Monday. He was 12 or 13 years old.

During his career, Max found more than 500 pounds of cocaine, heroin and other drugs, according to Lt. Joseph Charles, his handler. He won several K-9 awards and assisted

police departments in nearly every Camden County municipality.

The canine was also involved in a landmark legal case when he was one of the first dogs used to sniff out drugs. A federal judge ruled that it was legal to use trained K-9 dogs for that purpose.

Charles said Max played a key role in two homicide investigations by uncovering evidence that led to convictions. In one of his most famous cases, Max followed a scent from a murder scene 125 yards to the home of the man who was eventually convicted of the crime.

"Max was a one-person dog who

tolerated other people at best," said Charles. "He really got into his job, tracking murders, dope suspects, burglars; it didn't matter."

Max got into law enforcement by accident. A newlywed gave Max to the Philadelphia Police Department in 1981 after the dog and her new husband didn't get along.

Then just a puppy, Max was trained by the Philadelphia Department, which gave him to the Camden County Sheriff. Camden County began its K-9 unit a year later, in 1982.

Max will be cremated, Charles said he plans to keep the ashes.