

Paws to Dance



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.
May, 2004

WHAT IS A GUILD?

By Ann Holder

First Florida Freestylers Guild

Newcomers to CFF frequently ask, “What is a Guild?” “What does a Guild do?” What would joining a Guild do for me? Let’s begin with the American Heritage Dictionary’s definition of the word guild:

guild—an association of persons of the same trade or pursuits, formed to protect the mutual interests and maintain standards. This is a basic explanation of the word but the word carries so much more meaning for me. Here is what I think of when I refer to my experience with a guild.

G stands for Group. A group provides you with like-minded individuals to support your interest. They are your training buddies who see what you look like out on the floor, what skills need improvement, what moves show your dog to it’s best advantage, and what is pleasing to an audience. By combining each member’s talents and strengths, knowledge and skills, the group expands the body of information available to each member. The group shares knowledge and skills to support your efforts, celebrates your accomplishments, understands your problems, motivates, consoles, inspires, and becomes your best friends. The group is needed to achieve all

the opportunities of the CFF program. It takes the combined efforts of every member to raise funds, put on matches and trials, do demos and carry out the goals of CFF.

U stands for Unity of purpose. The purpose of the guild is to promote Canine Freestyle as defined by CFF and to promote and support CFF as an organization. The guild provides an opportunity to grow together in knowledge and skills within a discipline. It offers opportunities to work together to achieve a goal, develop skills in management, business, interpersonal relationships, public relations, fiscal responsibility, the list is limitless. The unity of purpose is shown best by the lack of competition between guild members and the emphasis on sharing the joy of freestyle and supporting each other and the CFF organization. It is “all for one and one for all”.

I stands for Information. The guild is the place to learn about CFF and freestyle. Here you learn to understand the CFF definition of freestyle. Classes are available to

Continued on page 6



From Your President

Hopefully by the time you read this Carl, Pixie and I will finally be settling in at our new home in Beaverdam, Virginia. It has been a long and slow process but the end is in sight. Our new address will be

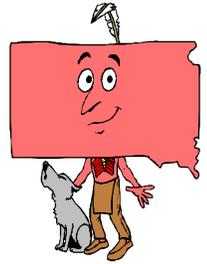
14430 Overlook Ridge Lane
Beaverdam, Virginia 23015-1787

This newsletter introduces our new "*Paws to Dance*" Editor Julia Gregory. Julia and her delightful corgi have competed and earned titles at CFF shows in Virginia and Florida. She also drove all the way to Rapid City, South Dakota from Tennessee to help with the show there.

To our outgoing newsletter editor Kay Richards you have produced wonderful and informative newsletters for several years. The newsletter is an important communication tool for our organization. Accepting the responsibility of editor is a demanding commitment. On behalf of the membership and the board thank you for sharing your time and talent with all us.

I'm looking forward to our second retreat in Mebane, North Carolina in June and seeing many of you there.

Joan



Canis Major

By Julia Gregory

We're trying to make ourselves heard here in the hills of Tennessee! We continue to work on our bylaws and strive to complete the requirements to be a guild. Several members have done demos in a wide variety of circumstances. Nancy and Boo regularly open each new session of obedience classes at the Obedience Club of Chattanooga with a freestyle demonstration. Several teams performed repeatedly throughout the day at the North Georgia Pet Fair held by the North Georgia Animal League. Fay and Bertha recently had the opportunity to join the circus ... sort of. They attended the grandstand finish of a unit of study on the circus at Lakeside Academy. To the delight of 150 kindergarteners, Fay and her trio, Bertha, Abby and Grace marched into the performance space to "Entrance of the Gladiators" by Sousa. Each dog did a freestyle routine (or a portion of one) and an obedience demonstration. Fay finished up with a short lesson on dog safety for the children. Later, during an interview with News Channel 9 anchor, Don Welsh, Fay was delighted by his remark that her work showed "great respect for the dogs"! Yes! They are getting it!

We are delighted that all the members have supported the idea that we should indulge in freestyle more frequently. We had been meeting monthly, but have committed to regular Saturday morning classes. To give you an idea of how important we think freestyle is for us and our dogs, here's a list of the other activities in which our dogs are competing; herding, tracking, flyball, obedience, agility and rally. Why do we keep coming back to freestyle? I hesitate to speak for my colleagues. I'll take poll and let you know, but for me, I love freestyle because I can train in the kitchen and it makes my dog look so good!

Dances with Woofs, South Dakota

Dances With Woofs Guild, Rapid City, South Dakota

By Dawn Madge

Howdy from the Wild West! CFF Freestyle is alive and well! I teach classes every Friday night. I started out with six new students in my introductory eight-week class and they are ALL going on to build routines and learn more about Freestyle. WOW! The rest of us who competed in last year's trial are also continuing, some of us with new music and at different levels.

We are having a Freestyle Fun Day on Sunday, May 2. We'll work on our routines, watch videos, listen to music, work moves, video tape and share ideas to plan our garage sale fundraiser. Above all, we'll have fun with each other and our dogs!

On March 6 I was invited to put on a demo/workshop for the Columbine Dachshund Club. There were 6 participants. You should have seen those doxies strut their stuff! We are looking forward to our second Freestyle show on Saturday, November 6, 2004. So y'all come west, everybody!

Sirius Guild

"

Where Every Dog Is A Star!

By Ann Priddy



From Show Chairman, Betty Swenson—"The 13th CFF Freestyle Show in Rockville, VA was a great success, thanks to the hard work of the members of the Sirius Guild. More than fifty individuals generously donated their time, talent, and resources to make this event possible, and every contribution is greatly appreciated.

The trophies and exhibitor bags were a huge hit, and the judges and workers seemed to appreciate their lunch and snacks. In addition to being a brilliant fundraiser, the Canine Galaxy display added to the decor of the show venue. There was a very large appreciative audience, thanks to well-planned pre-show publicity.

We were treated to many lovely performances from exhibitors who came from as far away as New York and Florida to share their dogs with us. A new title was earned in each of levels II, III, and IV, and (Continued on the next page)

Guild News More Staccato Notes



Sirius Guild continued

we're looking forward to seeing these routines again when Cameron's video is ready.

Lastly, we have a little bit of a head start on fund-raising for next year's show, as a little was left over after all the bills were paid this year. We'll begin working on income-producing ideas for March 2005 - the rent for the Rockville Civic Center is increasing, but we have ample time to build up our account balance."

Susanna Pathak has agreed to serve as our first Guild Treasurer. Thank you Susanna! Now we can open a bank account with the money we made on our show.

Next year's show will be held on March 12, 2005. This is to avoid any conflict with other dog shows and agility trials. Mark your calendars now!

At our March show our Guild once again collected pet food and books as "our admission fee". The Hanover Humane Society was the grateful recipient of at least 200 pounds of pet food. All the books collected went to benefit the Rockville Library! Thanks to all who contributed. The Sirius Guild is proud of its continuing tradition of supporting the community.

of Ethics" that represents our guild, will be among the agenda items discussed. Positions have been nominated, however, discussion and voting will take place at this meeting.

As the summer continues, the heat will be increasing on our teams to prepare for this fall's event. Feel free to bring a dish to share for our potluck, your dog, music, and all of your great ideas to our Summer meeting. Weekly classes are held in Napa, San Francisco, Sacramento, Walnut Creek, Petaluma, and a once a month class through the San Lorenzo Dog Training Club. For more information on the Gold Coast Freestyle Guild, please contact me. Beginners or experienced freestylers are welcome! Have a safe and happy summer! Judy Gamet (707) 449-1715, modynamics@jccomp.com

The Gold Coast

Freestyle Guild

Gold Coast Freestyle
Guild



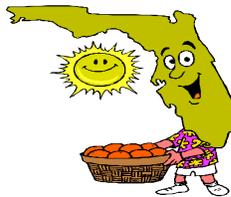
Freestyle Teams Shining Bright on the West Coast!

This spring has been a wonderful season for the growth of freestyle here on the West Coast. Since the new year, classes have grown and we have over 40 teams developing routines, many of which are repeating members and new members of the Gold Coast Freestyle Guild. I'd like to thank all of the Northern California teams who have devoted their month of May to performing demonstrations almost every weekend, some traveling to 2 demos in the same day! We were honored to represent CFF in the presence of a total of over 800 dog enthusiasts this spring. A dog walk in Elk Grove, Critter Camp in Petaluma, Tony Larussa's Animal Rescue Foundation's "Animals on Broadway", Northern California Golden Retriever Rescue's Wag N'Walk, Wings of History Museum in San Martin, San Francisco's SPCA Adoptathon, to name a few... What does all this mean for CFF? There is growing interest in the art and sport of canine freestyle from a perspective that shows the world, the honor and respect we have for our dogs.

The Gold Coast Freestyle Guild will have its first official meeting Saturday, June 26 at 5:00 pm in Vallejo, CA. Feel free to contact me for the location, new CFF members are more than welcome. We will be discussing the upcoming CFF event being held in Walnut Creek, CA this November. Fundraising, organization of the event, reviewing a "Code
Continued in left column.

First Florida Freestylers Guild

by Gaea Mitchel



It was a gorgeous spring day when the Guild met for the first time after our first competition. We had so much to talk about that we convened at our usual morning hour, even though our training room wouldn't be available until early afternoon. We set our chairs in the shade of spreading live oak trees on a lush green lawn, with a warm breeze caressing our faces, and got down to the business of the Valentine's Day competition and how we could improve on it for next year.

Elaine Smith brought some training tips to share with the group, including ways to begin teaching our dogs to work at a distance. This involved increasing distance with tiny baby steps, and talking to sticks! (Really, she was talking to the stick!) This of course was a way of letting the dog know it had crept forward, beyond the stick "barrier", without deflating the dog's enthusiasm with a direct correction. It was still pretty funny!

Ann Holder reported on her trip to the Rockville competition with Pip. It sounds like she had a really good trip, and she brought back some good ideas.

We stopped traffic when several members brought out their music to get the group's opinion on how well various pieces worked with their dogs. Working on grass isn't ideal, but even tiny Pip can really move through it when the music suits him!

Once we were able to get into the training room, we continued to work on music selection. Several members need to move up a level, and there are a couple of new dogs in our group. We worked on beginning to choreograph for a few teams who plan to go to the retreat in June, and want to have a new routine for the adjudicated match. We broke up the meeting late in the afternoon, a tired but completely contented bunch of people and dogs.

UP TO THE MINUTE UPDATE!

On May 22nd in Tallahassee, Florida representatives from the First Florida Freestylers Guild weathered the heat to do a successful demo at an animal shelter adoption day!!

Gaea Mitchel, Cynthia Campbell and Elaine Smith were the demoing team for this event. The positive comments received after the demo were impressive. The obedience people and the general public seemed dually interested. In fact, one lady said, "We need to gather up as many

cars as possible and drive to classes wherever they are. I want to do this!" Gaea and Cynthia who live in Tallahassee, both have plans to help turn that excitement into possible CFF membership for the future.

Elaine Smith did a short talk about CFF freestyle and explained what kinds of things the audience would see in the routines. She then introduced Gaea, Cynthia and the dogs that they had brought along. Since the event was an adaptation, she was sure to point out that three of the four dogs doing demos were rescues and that CFF not only allows for dogs of mixed origin, but encourages them. Gaea then brought out Peli, her Cavalier Spaniel, and did a lovely job demoing some the possible movements that are often showcased in a CFF routine.

The audiences' attention was then relocated to a 40 by 50 foot area marked for the freestyle routines. This area was challenging since it was a little uneven and it was in direct sunlight at high noon, but CFF Freestylers are always up for a challenge as long as it helps to get the word out. Elaine Smith began this portion of the demo with Blinky, a rescue found stuck in barbed wire in a ditch across from her house. Blinky and Elaine did an improve to a piece of spanish guitar music and showcased backing and lateral work for the audience. The finale was Itchi and Elaine's level 3 routine done to Secret Garden's Invitation.

Cynthia, a newer member of the guild, helped to answer questions, watch dogs, and pass out information about CFF. The three guild members walked away feeling tired, but very excited at the prospect of having increased interest in freestyle in the Tallahassee area. Another possible demo for that area is in November. Be on the lookout for more details to come!!

Elaine Smith
First Florida Freestylers Guild- Training Director

Misha Guild, Utah

The Misha guild still meets on Friday evenings. In April we did a demo at the Egyptian Theatre in Ogden for about 250 or 300 people. There were many different acts -- singing, dancing, musical groups, etc. We were very well received. Freestyle is still relatively unknown out here. The big thing in dogs now is agility -- it just made it to Utah about 2 or 3 years ago. We are definitely behind the rest of the country. We would welcome any ideas on how to get more people involved. Our group numbers about seven. We are all very close and really do believe in what Freestyle is all about. Susan Colledge

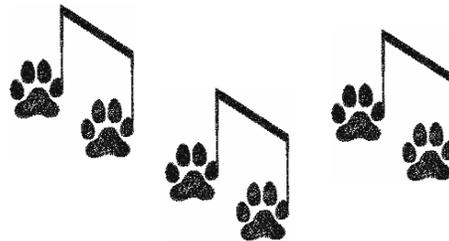
help you train your dog, develop attention, learn optional moves, etc. The Guild will teach you how to choose music, choreograph a routine, and help you to understand the standards of the organization, the requirements for competition, and how routines are judged. The guild is responsible for maintaining the standards of CFF and helping you to understand and meet them through classes, run-throughs, adjudicated matches and trials.

L stands for Leadership. The act of becoming a guild member opens a world of opportunities for developing and practicing leadership skills. There are many jobs to be done in any organization. Whatever skills you bring to the group will be put to use in carrying out the guild's program. There are guild Officers, committees, public relations, classes to teach, demos to organize, fund raisers, scheduling, matches, show-and-gos, trials, records to be kept, articles to be written, etc. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute in his or her own way. Guild leadership can lead to broader involvement with the national organization, serving on committees, organizing special events, becoming a judge, giving seminars.

D stands for Demonstrate. Guilds are responsible for holding true to the spirit and definition of canine freestyle and passing it on. This is done by setting an example in many areas. Dogs are treated with respect at all times. Positive training methods are advocated. The focus is on showing your dog to its best advantage. The relationship between dog and handler is the basis for all freestyle training. This is what you demonstrate wherever you go and whatever you do. When you take CFF training back to your local clubs, friends, and other dog organizations you are setting a higher standard of achievement. When your Guild does demon-

strations to promote CFF you are inspiring others to train their dogs, to come and learn about the joy of freestyle and to support the goals of CFF. We pride ourselves in always putting the health and welfare of our dogs first, in using good taste and family values in selecting music and choreographing routines, and being professional in carrying out our commitments to other organizations. We pride ourselves in being knowledgeable about CFF and able to explain to others what it is all about. We present an atmosphere for learning where there is no competition among ourselves, only sharing and helping each other so that each individual may reach his or her personal goals.

Freestyle is a difficult sport. Not everyone will be successful in attaining titles but everyone will be successful in attaining a deeper relationship with their dog. I like to think of it as a journey with the possibility of a title at the end. I may never get to the end but the experiences I am enjoying along the way are what are important to me. My guild membership has given me the opportunity to grow along with my dog. A guild is where every newcomer needs to be.





It's About the Dog!

Bertha and Canine Freestyle Federation

By Fay Taylor, Canis Major Guild

Bertha, UCDX Mills Lady Elizabeth CGC UD CFFIII, is a Manchester Terrier. Bertha came to me at six months of age, and I began obedience classes right away. I was really starting at the beginning, and everything I heard and saw was a new experience for us both. Bertha seemed to like her training. She was forgiving of the many mistakes I made along the way. I'm not amazed that Bertha got her Utility title, but I am amazed that I handled her to that final obedience title.

In *Front and Finish* Bertha was recognized as a 2002 and 2003 "Dog of Distinction" for placing in "First and Foremost" and "Delaney" ratings. For the magazine I wrote, "Bertha is a bright, courageous competitor in the obedience ring and a delight to watch. Training her can be a challenge because she tends to become creative." The retrieves in Open class and the directed jumps in Utility class were Bertha's favorite exercises since they presented opportunities for the most improvisation. She loved testing the floor surfaces. On the very "best" surfaces, she could become a jet-propelled sled. She enjoyed making all present gasp as she went airborne 6 to 8 feet in front of the jumps in the directed jump exercises, came in to me like a bullet and stopped in a skidding sit just an inch from me.

It seems a miracle that at least three times Bertha was able to accomplish the long out-of-sight sit-stays and down-stays required for the CDX title. She loves the performance ring and the cheers and applause. But I could not possibly mean for her to just sit or lie there in the ring. She seemed to feel that surely I must need her nearby. I must have simply forgotten her. Bertha usually scored in the 190's, except for those numerous times when she NQ'd because of the long sits and downs out-of-sight.

Bertha is retired, now, from obedience, but not because of any lack of athleticism. Bertha is nine years old, and like her handler, she needs bifocals. Numerous eye checks reveal that her main visual problem is diminishing depth perception. Bertha had begun to misjudge the distance to the jumps, hitting them hard and knocking them over with a momentum too dangerous for her to continue.

It was when I was anguishing over my attempts to re-train her jumping that Joan Tenille introduced us to Canine Freestyle at a seminar in Chattanooga. "Athleticism", "Attentiveness", "Artistry", "Grace", "Creativity" were some of the descriptive words Joan used to describe dogs and freestyle, and I felt Joan was talking specifically about Bertha! When I went onto the floor with Bertha, and Joan put Tijuana Taxi on the boom box, Joan said, "That's her song!" and I knew then that Bertha had a new career! Canine Freestyle! Bertha has shared the excitement I have had over the past year re-directing our training. We've only begun and still have so much to learn. I am still challenged, after nine years of obedience regimen, to step back and finally let Bertha's creativity flow.

Bertha and I worked on her routine to Tijuana Taxi for a year, when my Guild mates convinced me to take her to Florida. I learned the ring would possibly be a cold mat outside, and the horrors of the down-stays came back to me. Wisely, I changed her opening statement from "down/jump" to "sit/jump". Then, we made our travel plans to Jacksonville.

As Bertha's scheduled time to perform neared, I retrieved her from her warm kennel in the house, wrapped her in a

(Continued on page 10)

SIRIUS GUILD FREESTYLE SHOW

March 20, 2004



Listed in chronological order of placement 1st through 4th place

Congratulations to

Level I Team

1) Animal Protection Society Drill Team
Denise Johnson and Penny Lane, Airedale Terrier; Mary Cason and Amiga, Golden Retriever; Susan Spalt and Lucy, Irish Setter; Sandra Payne Green and Springforth Rubicon, Australian Shepherd; Dana Lindsey-Danner and Scully, Border Collie; Barbara Long and Moonstone's Selkie's Dance, Gordon Setter; Jenn Merritt and Big Sandy, Aussie Mix; Beth Rosenberg and Casper, Labrador Mix; Sharon Schiro and Elmo, PBGV
Music: Here Comes the Sun

Level II Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Elizabeth Claridge and Ch Eastlake Shirly Rocks, Parson Russell Terrier; Music: Rock Around the Clock, Titled
- 2) (tie) Kristin Sicotte and Kel Simoon Felaou, Azawakh; Music: Little Martha
- 2) (tie) Keith Hightower and Just A Bear, Keeshund Mix; Music: Concerto in D
- 4) Verna Allanson and Dutchess, Mixed Breed, Music: Happy Hobo

Level III Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Bonnie Schick and Elf Saddle Allspice, Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Music: Bumble Boogie, Titled
- 2) Sue Ann Lesser and Careveille Double Entendre UD, Doberman Pinscher, Music: Angel Eyes
- 3) Maryanne Cantwell and Connor Curran Cantwell, Golden Retriever, Music: Fascination Rhythm

Level IV Single Dog and Handler Team

- 1) Kay Richards and Terrier Turf's Ebbie CDX CFFIV, Parson Russell Terrier, Music: Comin' Home Baby, CFF President's Award for Highest Artistic Score
- 2) Lisa Gross and U-OCH OTCH Norwood's Steppin' Out UDX TD, Border Collie, Music: Classical Gas, Titled
- 3) Betty Swenson and V OTCH U-UD U-AGI Wildfire's Wrong Trousers UDX NA NAJ PT HRDI CH CFFIV, Border Collie, Music: Take Five
- 4) Ann Priddy and Imp Print's Pollyanna CD CFFIV, Cairn Terrier, Music: Angel Eyes

Veterans

- 1) Carol Maupin and OTCH U-CDX Jamaica Hot Pursuit UDX TD CH CFFIV, Belgian Turvuren, Music: The Cider House Rules
- 2) Shari Bryant and Diamond's Wind Dancer Tia CD, Shetland Sheepdog, Music: Zydeco Express
- 3) James Barrett and Summerfield's Apple of My Eye CD NDD TDIA, Bernese Mountain Dog, Music: Wild Weekend

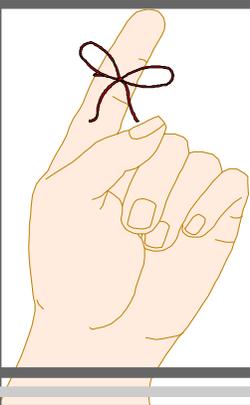
Welcome to the Second CFF Retreat!!

If you could see me as I type this, you would see a huge grin on my face and my eyes alight with anticipation for the upcoming CFF Freestyle Retreat, June 25-26, 2004, in Mebane, NC, at an animal sanctuary. Many of the same ingredients which contributed to the huge success of CFF's first Retreat two years ago are here again, with a new twist, for the second Retreat. Many of our previous instructors are back again, and no, they aren't the twisted element. Most of these instructors are teaching a different topic from what they taught at the first Retreat or are teaching the same class but from a different angle. Therefore, those of you who attended the first Retreat should not hesitate to join us again. There are new offerings, as well as some more traditional classes.

Once again, we have strived to offer at each block of classes a choice for the beginner freestyler as well as one for the advanced student. We also have classes that are suitable for participants at any level of training. Classes run from 45 to 90 minutes. Friday and Saturday are full days of classes, a banquet and catered lunches on site (requiring pre-registration), and a CFF meeting Friday evening. Following classes on Friday is a Happy Hour wine-and-cheese reception for all participants. Saturday evening is open for participants to dine out and explore the area. Sunday is a half-day and hosts an adjudication match (no scores or prizes but comments from qualified CFF judges) for any participant with a routine. There will be listening stations set up during all 3 days and a CD swap, so bring your old CDs! A small shop on the premise offers dog-related items for sale, including books and training equipment. Should you wish to run your friendly dog off-leash in a safe, fenced area on site, you may purchase Dog Park Passes when you arrive.

Actual class choices will include sessions on choreographing your own routine at beginner and advanced levels; technical training of and practice in required and optional movements at all levels; a focus on artistry such as how handler movement can enhance a dog's performance, opening and closing shapes in choreography, and motivation in choreography. In addition, there will be classes on music selection, canine structure and how it impacts on a freestyle performance, attention and clicker training, how to make heeling a joyous activity for both dog and handler, how to teach a freestyle class, and how to choreograph a multiple dog/handler routine. All instructors are members of CFF and most are also CFF competitors and judges. They include holders of OTCH titles, our first two (and only) CFF Champions, two veterinarians, two writers for Front and Finish, and holders of many other dog performance titles.

We are thrilled to use the same site as used two years ago: the Felicite Latane Animal Sanctuary in Mebane, NC. The building is spacious and new and wonderfully air-conditioned; the location is in the quiet countryside. Because the food was so delicious, reasonable in cost, and promptly served and cleaned up, we are again using the same caterer for the on-site meals. **Continued on the next page.**



DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE RETREAT. It promises to be even more fun and informative than the last one. For more details see above!

“Bertha” continued from page 7

blanket, and held her tightly in my lap until the end of the performance just before ours. I quickly took her out of the blanket, and led her around the outside of the ring. We were approaching the entrance area just as the bell rang. I took off her leash, and we continued our walk into the ring to acknowledge the judges. I then set Bertha up for her opening, nodded to the sound technician, and her piece began. On the beep of the horn and my signal Bertha jumped to the height of my nose! I knew, then, she was with me, and would carry me through. The applause at the end by the most gracious audience we've ever had was reward enough for her. She knew you wanted more, so she decided to show off with her amazing spring jumps as we left the ring.

Thank you, Canine Freestyle Federation, for what you have done for us. Bertha has a new profession that can carry her for as long as she likes! She no longer must sit and stay out of my sight in a performance ring. This exercise can be quite dangerous for small dogs. Though she would still courageously run for those utility jumps, I will no longer ask her to try. I have learned an incredible new respect for her. Already, as we've begun training some new moves for our Level IV routine, I'm learning to make the suggestions to Bertha, but to respect her creativity as she shows me her wonderfully inventive ways to achieve our goals. Bertha is having a wonderful time! Didn't you notice that in Jacksonville?



“Retreat” continued from page 9

If you have not received a brochure, you may contact either me at blkdogtrainer@aol.com or Marge Hetrick at jhetr61480@aol.com to receive one. The registration form is in the brochure and the deadline for registrations has been extended.

Please do consider attending! It is an amazing way to learn about and participate in this great sport, to make friends with like interests, and to spend quality time with your dog. I hope to see you there!

Mary Sullivan

“Diamond” continued from page 11

Maybe not in every area, but in something.
Every dog has a gift.

There is something beautifully unique about dogs that have lived without love, affection, or even care. They seem to reach down and touch your soul in ways that cannot be explained. I have found that canine freestyle has allowed for the intense spiritual bond that is shared with these dogs to be displayed and celebrated. I believe Joan Tennille described it well when she explained that canine freestyle, when done with mutual sharing, is as close to sharing a common language with dogs as it ever gets. For a small window of time, we have the opportunity to communicate with our dogs without obstruction. We are truly blessed.

The next time you are considering a new freestyle partner, remember there may be a warm heart out there, sitting in a shelter, just waiting to be your diamond in the rough.

***Paws To Dance* is published four times a year,
in February, May, August and November.**

**Deadlines are the 25th of the preceding month.
DEADLINE for the next issue is July 25, 2004. So Please!**

Try to be timely.

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**The contents of *Paws To Dance* represent the opinions of the
authors, not necessarily those of CFF.**

Thank you! From your Editor.

Many thanks for a warm welcome to this new adventure! I've had kind words from Kay Richards who so ably produced this newsletter for so long. She continues to help with quandaries and bewilderments. Several others have sent welcoming words and even more important ... INPUT! This is YOUR newsletter. I only rearrange what you send me. Want to see more of something, less of something? You have to tell me. Please don't be shy! Isn't this a great sport? One of the most important concepts in freestyle is that we cannot do it alone. So let's get our thoughts and inspirations down on paper (yes, I accept snail mail!) and share, share, share. Right here! I hope I can be of service to you.

Diamond in the Ruff

By: Elaine Smith

Approved by: Ichi Smith

Every morning I drive by the Clay County Humane Society shelter and I am reminded of the hundreds of sad faces looking out at me with hope in their eyes. Even though I have been making this trip almost everyday for the last five years, it never gets any easier to look into those kennel runs and see despair. Being a dog performance enthusiast, I have come to appreciate the potential in every dog. I have also come to appreciate the opportunity that CFF canine freestyle has given to the many dogs in the world who are of mixed origin.

When I first began my journey into the doggy performance world, I had two dogs: Ichi and Jasmine. Ichi was about a year old at the time and was very fearful and feral. Jasmine was a puppy who came from the Clay County Animal Shelter. Neither of these two dogs had the prestigious purebred label. It did not take me long to find that I really enjoyed obedience work. My excitement was quickly dampened when I was told that I did not own a real dog. Those around me went on to explain that my mixed breed dogs had little or no value and that if I wanted to pursue dog obedience competitively, I needed to get a purebred dog and forget about Ichi and Jasmine. I was even advised to abandon them. I was mortified. I almost walked away from dog obedience and performance altogether. Fortunately, an obedience friend of mine was able to convince me to stay with it. I became very determined to show those people who could not see past my dog's heritage, how wrong they were.

Both Ichi and Jasmine have done just that. Jasmine was given an ILP number and was awarded a Dog World award in obedience for her novice scores. She makes her debut in Open in the fall. As for Ichi, she has taken the freestyle world by storm. She loves it with every fiber of her being. Her whole doggy body radiates joy when she sees her freestyle friends both canine and human and when she hears her music playing, she becomes larger than life. I now own both purebred and mixed breed dogs and I enjoy them all for different reasons. I work them all in some kind of dog performance area and I can honestly say that I disagree with those people who think that purebred dogs are better performance dogs. I think every dog has potential to shine.

(Continued on page 10)

CFF, Inc.
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Inside This Issue

What Is a Guild? by Ann Holder.....p. 1
From your President.....p. 2
Guild News Staccato Notes.....p. 3 - 5
It's About the Dog! by Fay Taylor.....p. 7
Sirius Guild Show Results.....p. 8
ETREAT!.....p. 9
Diamond in the Rough, by Elaine Smith..... p 11
Thank you! From your Editor..... p.11

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