

# *Paws to Dance*



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.  
May, 2006

## Honoring Two Great Dogs

To be nominated for induction in the CFF Hall of Fame a dog must be nominated by a member of CFF. The dog and his handler must have influenced and/or moved Canine Freestyle to new levels creatively and artistically and by participating in demos and competitive events they contribute to development of a knowledgeable audience and interest in the discipline of Canine Freestyle.

Recently two dogs, Gromit, Betty Swenson's Border Collie and Ebbie, Kay Richards' Parson's Terrier who clearly exceed these criteria were inducted into the CFF Hall of Fame all of Famm They join eight other dogs Jag, a Terv, Keats, a Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Claire, a Cavalier, Misha, a Yorkie, Cajun, a Belgian, Jay Jay, a Berner, Chase, another Terv,



and Tugger, a Portuguese Water Dog.

Gromit and Ebbie with the help of their handlers have always been ready to demo, near or far. These two teams' have set the standards for training and choreographing for level IV. Their performances have been outstanding. Their choreography is always inventive and shows the dog to his best advantage imaginatively. Their performances are the best examples of the image of one we all strive for and their choreography is always beautifully balanced.

Both of these wonderfully talented ladies are instructing at the Retreat. Come and learn from them and others at the retreat, see page 2.



## Demo at the Baltimore County Kennel Club's AKC Breed, Obedience and Rally Show.

What a wonderful day, yesterday in Maryland. We had a noontime demonstration in the center ring of the Baltimore County Kennel Club's AKC Breed, Obedience and Rally Show. Thank you to the following dog and handler teams for sharing your dogs and your joy of freestyle:

Carol Levy and her Shetland Sheepdog Callie; Sally Kirschenman and her Old English Sheepdog Annie; Brandy Clymire and her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Harley; Bonnie Shelmandine and her Rottweiler Chaz; Jeanine Brown and her Brittany Trapper; Kristin Sicotte and her Azawakh Felaou.

There was a large audience and we were able to provide them with a lot of information on Canine Freestyle and generate interest in our sport.

Thanks to the Baltimore County Kennel Club for inviting the Canine Freestyle Federation to present this demonstration. We are honored to be a part of this great show.

Joan Tennille

## Up-Coming Events

You won't want to miss it!

**September 24:** Adjudicated match and run-throughs, CFF fall show site, Stafford, VA

**November 4-5,:** Dances with Woofs shows Rapid City, SD

**November 12:** CFF fall show, Stafford, VA

If you have an event you want to appear in this space, simply contact the editor of Paws to Dance.

## It's Almost Time to **RETREAT!**

From June 23 'til Jun 25, in Mebane, North Carolina, a remarkable thing will happen. CFF freestylers from all over the country, from California to Florida, will gather to teach, to learn, to share, to encourage, to network and to brainstorm. The facility is air conditioned with a separate crating room. Floors are fully matted. There is ample parking and a fenced field for exercising dogs. The food is great and the company is better. This unparalleled event happens only once every two years. If you haven't registered, you'll want to do so right away. Lost the form that was mailed? No worries, go on-line to [www.canine-freestyle.org](http://www.canine-freestyle.org) and download the form. Or email the registrar, Gaea Mitchel, at [gmitchel@nettally.com](mailto:gmitchel@nettally.com). Hurry! The deadline to register is May 26th.

At this time, classes include the following:

**Viva La Difference** – This class covers training techniques and issues, music selection, choreography and presentation with reference to first the big dog, then the little dog. The juxtaposition will generate additional productive insights for training and handling.

**Building a Movement Vocabulary** – How do you take the required movements and combine them into phrases that are both logical and organic? It's different for every dog. Learn the basic concepts to guide you in building YOUR vocabulary. (Kay Richards)

*Continued on page 9*

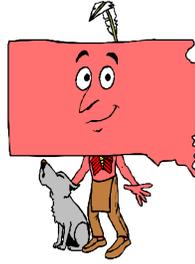


## Guild News—Staccato Notes

### *Dances With Woofs* *South Dakota*

by Dawn Madge

Howdy everyone! We are working hard out here in the SNOWY west!! An' y'all thought it was spring. Spring out here is one day it can be 80 degrees and the next day snow. We are all busy tweaking and polishing our routines. Four members from the Rapid City, Black Hills of South Dakota Chapter were invited to demonstrate their skills and routines at the Annual Sled Dog Races held February 11 in Hill City, South Dakota. The four sterling performances "wow'd the crowd" that packed the Boys and Girls Club. All four levels of competition were demonstrated. I answered many questions and "the demonstration generated much interest". I also put on a little workshop for the 4-H kids here in town and they had a good time. We are getting things lined up for our show. Mark your calendars for Nov.4-5 and head west!!



### **Canis Major Guild**

by Julia Gregory

Some nice people came to Chattanooga from Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland and points east. We had a dog show. We laughed. We cried. We showed off our dogs. We ate. We drank. We told stories. We learned from each other. We made new friends. It was fun. If you missed it, we wish you had been with us. We'll do it again next year in Florida. We hope you'll come.

Now we're going to help put on a retreat. You should come to that too! You'll be glad you did. We'll do a lot of the same things as we did at the show. Only we'll learn more.

We're preparing demos for Dog Daze in August. We're readying routines for the November CFF show. That's pretty much it. Isn't this fun?



### **First Florida Freestylers Guild**

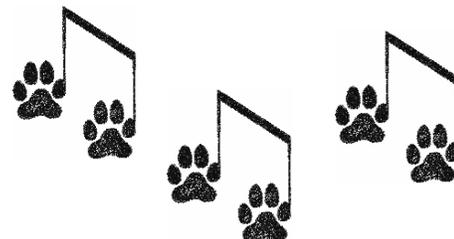
by Gaea Mitchel



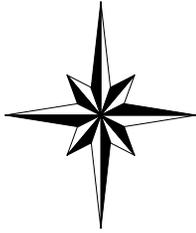
First Florida Freestyle Guild had a busy quarter, and we owe Canis Major a huge THANK YOU! In the course of preparing for our joint two day show, originally planned for Tallahassee, we ran into an unexpected wall. Both of Tallahassee's universities, along with the slightly smaller Community College, had moved graduation up from May to OUR weekend the end of April. If any motel rooms had been available, they would have cost well in excess of \$100 a night. While we pride ourselves on hospitality, I couldn't quite come up with enough places for four judges and all the out-of-town exhibitors in my three bedroom house, and most of our own members live too far to commute from their homes. Canis Major came to the rescue, seamlessly taking the venue into Chattanooga and making one and all feel comfortable and welcome.

Our core group of five made the trip north with the official paperwork, Cynthia Campbell's goodie bags and Ann Holder's raffle baskets. Cathy Nierenberg, of Gear to Go, had handmade training tabs to add to the goodie bags, as well as a beautiful lead for one of the top prizes. Elaine Smith acted as our announcer, with Ann and others pitching in where needed. As always, keeping the show running smoothly was a group effort, and with Canis Major filling in the gaps we made it through in style.

Thanks to our judges, Jim the Music Man, and Cameron, whose videography always makes us look our best.



## Guild News More Staccato Notes



### *Sirius Guild*

"Where Every Dog Is A Star!"  
Nan Marks

Spring has been a time of celebration for the dog and human teams of the Sirius Guild. In February the Guild sponsored a run through opportunity at CTA in Beltsville, MD welcoming all comers and giving those competing in Rockville in March a nice chance to try out their routines. A great group gathered to enjoy the opportunity and learn from each other, one coming from as far as Pennsylvania and several from Richmond. Freestyle teachers Mary Sullivan, Marge Hetrick, Mary Jane Zarnowski and Kristen Sicotte were there to do run-throughs but also generously offered input and advice. Our big event for the season was the Rockville show and terrific show chair Jim Barrett has written a separate article on it. While he mentions his focus on keeping all happy (and we were!) he neglects to mention his homemade and delicious bon-bons that cured any crisis of nerves. In closing though I can't resist mentioning a few things about the show. First there was the beautiful and touching tribute to Betty and Gromit - what an amazing partnership they are (there is now a DVD of all their routines available from CFF--my copy is wearing out). Second is our tied competitors who earned high artistic Mary Sullivan with her beautiful Belgian and Bonnie Shelmandine who wowed us all as a newcomer with her wonderful Rottweiler. Third is the joy I say in every routine as we shared this relationship with our dogs, and, finally, the wonderful event and welcome orchestrated by Jim and the many volunteers he credits.



### *Misha Guild, Utah*

By Susan Colledge

The Misha guild is preparing new routines to perform at an ITA (Intermountain Therapy Animals) big gala this September. Right now everyone is looking for music. I am also working on Tessa's performance so we can perform at the Yorkie Nationals in August in Philadelphia.

I enjoyed so much visiting with everyone in March when I went back East to judge at the Sirius Guild show.



### **From the Sirius Guild Co-Chairs**

Nancy Smith and Kay Richards

Congratulations to all the competitor teams at the Rockville Trial, March 18, 2006. What a great performance from you all!

Thank you volunteers--what a professional group of team-players you are. The set-up and breaking down went smoothly and the show was fabulous. I know that a lot of work went into the planning and scheduling of everything and it showed. Thank you especially to Jim Barrett, David Brobst, Verne Allison, Betty Swenson, Cameron Foster, Jim Moore and Carl Tennille. Our special thanks to Joan Tennille for sharing this wonderful sport with us all.

If we have forgotten someone, we apologize. Please know that your efforts did not go unnoticed intentionally. Everyone at the show had a wonderful time and you all made it happen.

We are looking forward to an even better show in 2007.



## Sirius Guild Show Results

Rockville, Virginia

March 18, 2006

### Level I

First Place and a **NEW TITLE** Shari Bryant and her Whippet Grace Gift Sky's the Limit

Second Place Barbara Long and her Gordon Setter Moonstone Selkie's Dance RN

Third Place Nancy Sanders and her Belgian Sheepdog Signatures' Chance

### Level II

First Place and a **NEW TITLE** Bonnie Shelmandine and her Rottweiler Joplins B Good Dog Carl, CD

Second Place Susanna Pathak and her Rough Collie Jag-View Sunrapt Sultan

Third Place Tie Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier Data Welsh Everlasting Cash, JE, CGC

Third Place Tie Carol Levy and her Shetland Sheepdog Callie

### Level III

First Place and a **NEW TITLE** Mary Sullivan and her Belgian Sheepdog Signature's Carbon Copy

Second Place and a **NEW TITLE** Jeanine Brown and her Brittany Trapper

Third Place Lindsay Ridgeway and his Golden Retriever Lumiere Du Soleil

Fourth Place Brenda Clymire and her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel UACHX Busybee Harlequin's Curlicue, CD, AX, AXJ, NAP, NAJP, CFFII

### Level IV

First Place Fay Taylor and her Manchester Terrier ICDX Mill's Lady Elizabeth, UD CFFIV

### Veterans

First Place Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier Ch Layna's Hey Big Spender, ME, AXJ, OA, CD, CGC, CG

Second Place Joanie Brobst and her Norwich Terrier Fairfield JT

There was a tie for the President's Artistic Challenge Trophy for the highest artistic score by a single dog team in a regular class between Bonnie Shelmandine and her Rottweiler Joplins B Good Dog Carl, CD and Mary Sullivan and her Belgian Sheepdog Signature's Carbon Copy. Congratulations to both of these outstanding teams.



**First Florida Freestylers Guild Show**  
**Saturday, 29 April, 2006**  
**Play Dog eXcellent, Chattanooga, TN**

**Level I**

First Place Ann Holder and her Peruvian Hairless Dog  
IABCA Junghund CH Zero-G Chasca Coyller,  
RN

**Level IIA**

First Place Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier  
DataWelsh Everlasting Cash, JE, NA, NAJ with a **NEW TITLE**

Second Place Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier CH  
Layna's Hey Big Spender, CD, ME, OA, AXJ,  
CGC with a **NEW TITLE**

Third Place Shari Bryant and her Whippet Grace Gift Sky's  
the Limit, CFFI

Fourth Place Cynthia Campbell and her Peekapoo  
U-ACH, U-CDX Amanda Rose Campbell CGC, RTD

**Level II B**

First Place Gaea Mitchel and her Rottweiler Chubasco  
Kadja von Fianna, CD, RN with a **NEW TITLE**

Second Place Fay Taylor and her Shetland Sheepdog U-  
CDX Wildrose Marquis Secret, UD, OA, AXJ

**Level III**

First Place Julia Gregory and her Cardigan Welsh Corgi  
McLea's Bashful Bombur, CFFII

Second Place Cathy Nirenberg and her Belgian Tervuren  
UCDX CH Maplerun's Trouble with Tribbles,  
UD, RE CFFII

**Level IV**

First Place Fay Taylor and her Manchester Terrier UCDX  
Mills Lady Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV

Second Place Elaine Smith and her Mixed Breed Smith's  
Itching to Go, CFF III and a **NEW TITLE**

**Veterans**

First Place Jeanine Brown and her Brittany Trapper,  
CFF III

Highest Artistic Score was a tie between Gaea Mitchel and  
her Rottweiler Chubasco Kadja von Fianna, CD, RN and  
Fay Taylor and her Manchester Terrier UCDX Mills Lady  
Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV

And the Grail Trophy awarded by the First Florida Free-  
style Guild for the highest teamwork score was won by Fay  
Taylor and her Manchester Terrier UCDX Mills Lady  
Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV

CFF also had the opportunity to induct Kay Richards  
Parsons Terrier Turf's Ebbie, CDX, CFF Champion,  
a very special dog, into the CFF Hall of Fame. Thank you  
Kay and Ebbie for all the wonderful sharing and the  
fantastic presentations you have and are continuing to  
make.

**Canis Major Guild Show**  
**Sunday, 30 April, 2006**  
**Play Dog eXcellent, Chattanooga, TN**

**Level I**

First Place Ann Holder and her Peruvian Hairless Dog  
IABCA Junghund CH Zero-G Chasca Coyller, RN

**Level IIA**

First Place Shari Bryant and her Whippet Grace Gift Sky's  
the Limit, CFFI

Second Place Andrea Jones and her Bassett Hound Hey  
There Georgie Girl

Third Place Fourth Place Cynthia Campbell and her  
Peekapoo U-ACH, U-CDX Amanda Rose Campbell CGC,  
RTD

Fourth Place Suzette Wood and her Wirehaired Pointing  
Griffon Greylock Glen's Chewbaka

**Level II Brace**

First Place Fay Taylor and her Shetland Sheepdog UCDX  
Wildrose Marquis Secret, UD, OA, AXJ and her Manches-  
ter Terrier UCDX Mills Lady Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV  
with the First EVER CFF II

**NEW TITLE**, First brace title in CFF history!

**Level III**

First Place Julia Gregory and her Cardigan Welsh Corgi  
McLea's Bashful Bombur, CFFII and a **NEW TITLE**

Second Place Cathy Nirenberg and her Belgian Tervuren  
UCDX CH Maplerun's Trouble with Tribbles, UD, RE  
CFFII

**Level IV**

First Place Elaine Smith and her Mixed Breed Smith's  
Itching to Go, CFF III, IV

Second Place Fay Taylor and her Manchester Terrier  
UCDX Mills Lady Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV

**Veterans**

First Place Jeanine Brown and her Brittany Trapper,  
CFF III

Second Place Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier CH  
Layna's Hey Big Spender, CD, ME, OA, AXJ,  
CGC, CFF II

For Exhibit Only Presentations were made by

Janet McBrien and her Welsh Terrier DataWelsh Ever-  
lasting Cash, JE, NA, NAJ, CFF II

Gaea Mitchel and her Rottweiler Chubasco Kadja von  
Fianna, CD, RN, CFFII

Kay Richards and her Parson's Jack Russell Terrier Eb-  
bie, CFF IV

Highest Artistic Score was won by Fay Taylor and her  
brace of Shetland Sheepdog UCDX Wildrose Marquis Se-  
cret, UD, OA, AXJ and Manchester Terrier UCDX Mills  
Lady Elizabeth, UD CFF III, IV

# An Image of One

Chattanooga  
29 & 30 April, 2006



Elaine Smith and Itchy after earning their Level IV title with Joan Tennille.



Gaea Mitchel and Kadja perform their Level II routine.



Julia Gregory and Bombur finish their Level III performance.



Fay Taylor with (l-r) Bertha and Abby receive the President's High Artistic Award for their titling Level II routine. The award is presented by Joan Tennille. This is the first brace ever to title in CFF history.

# Report on the Fifth Sirius Guild Freestyle Show

by James Barrett

By any measure, our March 18<sup>th</sup> 2006 freestyle show was a great success.

Our judges, Nancy Smith, Julia Gregory, Verne Foster and Susan Colledge did an excellent job at what is always a difficult assignment. We had 20 entries and most of the handlers were seasoned veterans.

This resulted in many fine performances.

At the Show CFF recognized one of the truly outstanding dogs in canine freestyle by inducting Gromit (V, OTCH, U-OTCH, U-AGI, Wildfire's Wrong Trousers, UDX2, NA, NAJ, PT, HRD-1, RE, CH CFF IV) into the CFF Hall of Fame in recognition of his and his handler Betty Swenson's significant contributions to our sport. Thank you Betty and Gromit for sharing your joy with us and many others

It takes many people to put on a successful show. In our case some of the truly dedicated workers include: Dave Brobst, show secretary extraordinaire; Verne Allanson, trophies; Jim Moore, music; Brandy Clymire, advertising; Betty Swenson, hospitality (and so much more); Cameron Foster, videographer; Marge Hetrick, scribe extraordinaire; Nan Marks, Mary Sullivan, Susanna Pathak, Joanie Brobst, Sarah Foster, Pam Miller, Janis Dibert, Ann Priddy, Mary Ann Massie, Summer Lee, Teresa Pownall, Kristen Sicotte, Beth Baldwin, Susan Altimore., Kay Richards and Carl and Joan Tennille.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the special help given to me by Carol Maupin, last year's show chair. She helped in many ways but one will serve as an example. She told me that a good chair is like a good host at a party – if the host has a good time with the guests, then the guests will have a good time. I took this advice to heart and a lot of people smiled back!

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## Thanks from Chattanooga

What a great Canine Freestyle celebration we had in Chattanooga April 29 and 30! There were two phenomenal shows, back-to-back, with First Florida Freestylers Guild (FFF) hosting on Saturday and Canis Major Guild (CMG) hosting on Sunday. Our sincerest congratulations and gratitude go first to our competitors who worked with their amazing dogs to build those awesome team relationships that you shared with us. CFF freestyle gets better and better!

Thank you to Betty Swenson, Nancy Smith, Joan Tennille and Kay Richards, our judges. They did a remarkable thing for us on Sunday. They spent an hour with any interested exhibitors explaining how they had judged our routines. What an added value! Thanks too, to Jim Moore, Carl Tennille and Cameron Foster for the time and effort away from your regular lives you so graciously gave to us to make this event happen. Canis Major extends special thanks to First Florida Freestylers Guild for your willingness to share this weekend with us, and for your enormous amount of preparation effort. What a great group of freestylers! Special thanks to our hospitality team, Becky Sullivan, Andrea and Bev for our delicious dinner. No less appreciated, are all the volunteers from FFF and CMG, Bev Eitner and Nancy Miller of Play Dog eXcellent, the Obedience Club of Chattanooga and other wonderful friends who worked as scribes, stewards, property management, printers, and all the other jobs that must come together to make these shows successful. Forgive me, you whom I may have forgotten to acknowledge, in my haste to say "Thank you" in time for the *Paws to Dance* deadline.

Fay Taylor

## A Word from Betty Swenson

I would like to thank the CFF Board for voting to induct my dear Gromit into the CFF Hall of Fame. It is a great honor to be placed in the august company of the wonderful dogs who pioneered our sport. I am always thrilled when others recognize how special he is - as I've said many times, Gromit is the kind of dog who can make any idiot look like a good trainer. And in the context of Freestyle, he can even make that same idiot look artistic! Special thanks go to Joan Tennille for her moving tribute at his induction ceremony, and to Cameron Foster for the lovely compilation DVD of Gromit's routines - I will cherish it forever.

I also want to express my gratitude to the First Florida and Canis Major guilds for their hospitality during their April 29 & 30 weekend of Freestyle shows. I know how stressful it is to organize and put on one of these events, but would not have been able to tell it from dealing with these ladies. Without exception, everyone was gracious, welcoming, relaxed, and in good humor. The special touches like being met at the motel, guided to dinner, and the goodie basket in the motel room were much appreciated. And to all those who exhibited at these show, thank you for sharing your dogs with us!

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### *RETREAT continued from page 2*

**Handling and Attire** – This dynamic duo will show you what's wrong and what's right in the ring. Avoid out-shining and over-facing your dog and learn instead to be the perfect enhancement to your dog's beautiful movement. (Sally Kirshenman, Nancy Smith)

**With the Music** – Learn how to download free programs that you can use to edit that perfect tune for your dog. Step by step instructions and expert help along the way.

**Imagination, Innovation and Invention** – These three "I's" are the building blocks of artistry. Develop your choreographic technique and creativity. This class offers discussion and floor exercises. (Joan Tennille)

**Canine Massage** – Knowing how to use your hands to manipulate your dog's muscles can improve both physical condition and mental outlook ... for both of you! (Brandy Clymire)

**Conditioning to a Peak** – Freestyle is not for couch potatoes! For your dog to be able to maintain attention and engaging movement for one and a half minutes or more requires a certain level of physical fitness. Learn about different levels of physical conditioning for the freestyle dog. (Betty Swenson)

**Inspiration to Celebration** – "Tricks of the trade" from music selection to honoring the audience are the topics of this class. Having a plan helps you avoid unpleasant surprises and set-backs and puts you at your most prepared as you enter the ring. (Kristin Sicotte, Julia Gregory)

**The Empty Canvas** – The performance space may look large and empty to you, but each part of the space has a power and a use of its own. Learn to use the space to put your dog in the spotlight. (Kristin Sicotte)

**Building the Multi-dog Team** – Why build a multi-dog team? It's a less frightening way to start freestyle. It's a great way to have fun with friends. Not many people do it, so it makes you special! These sisters and teammates will explain how to pick partners and music; give ideas for innovative choreography and even address how to practice together separately. (Julia Gregory, Gaea Mitchel)

**A Little Handler Fitness Goes a Long Way** – You don't have to be an athlete to excel at freestyle, but each of us can improve our performance by improving our fitness. The class addresses handler conditioning for safety, strength, grace and stamina. This instructor's motto is "A LITTLE handler fitness goes a long way." (Dr. Francisca Lytle)

**The Rules of the Game** – View recordings of past shows, demos and workshops and join in this discussion led by a panel of experienced freestylers. How do we maximize creativity within the framework established by CFF rules? (Joan Tennille)



# Board News

The Board is currently engaged in a guided brainstorming process to identify root causes and provide solutions to improve retention of new freestylers in the sport. This process began during a meeting after the show in Chattanooga and will continue at the retreat.

The husband of long-time member Marge Hetrick recently passed away and the Board voted to make a contribution to the Maryland Animal Response Team in his memory.

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## CFF Freestyle Seminar with Verne Foster

by Nan Marks

Professional artist and Canine Freestyle artist, Verne Foster used both skill sets to enhance the canine freestyle skills of an eager group of participants at a CFF seminar. The seminar, "From Ooops to Ahhh", was the leadoff seminar in CFF's new series of training seminars for this year. It provided a wonderful toolbox of strategies both for avoiding the "Ooops" you really don't want (often the product of your training misstep or omission) and developing the "Ahhh" you never imagined before (sometimes building off that creative oops proffered by your canine partner).

Appealing to the analytical left side of the brain, and drawing on decades of training experience, Verne shepherded us through a number of training dos and don'ts including (1) the importance of giving the dog your full attention when training (it's what you expect back isn't it?); (2) the pros and cons of voice and hand cues and clarity within those cues; (3) what tells you the dog is confused or overwhelmed and how you can train to avoid that (sniffing, head turning, yawning, barking, wandering ... she's probably not blowing you off, you've probably been unclear and she's running for mental cover [my own dog was taking notes and giving me meaningful looks during this part]); and finally--with the aid

of great graphics (4) understanding and appreciating the three dimensional impact of both the dog and handler team and the space within which they operate during a performance.

Appealing to the creative right side of the brain Verne took the attendees on a creative voyage, first establishing, with exercises with our dogs, that we had a lot of moves, and then running us through exercises that forced us out of our comfort zone into trying new combinations. We saw what worked and what didn't, and how we might tweak the "oops" that didn't into something that might be great. We finished with a vision quest exercise in stretching the possibilities. We used lateral moves where the dog and handler start apart, move towards and then past each other and moves where the dog spirals out from or into the person, fueling an understanding that if we can imagine it we can probably break down the details and work out a way to train it. I know I'm not alone in having left not only with good materials and insights from Verne but also with a notepad full of ideas garnered from watching the various attendees applying their own creativity to Verne's exercises. What luck we all have to be part of such a knowledgeable and knowledge-sharing community.



Verne and Kayak

## **I Have a Dog; Now What Do I Do?**

by Mary Sullivan

*Editor's Note: In the last issue, Mary introduced some good advice to newcomers to Canine Freestyle. She explained CFF's emphasis on the dog instead of the handler, warned against "kitchen sink" choreography and emphasized the foundation positions of "heel" and "front". Her article is concluded in this issue.*

Some handlers train alone and are successful at it, but for newcomers to freestyle, participation in a freestyle class, attendance at matches and shows and workshops, and getting their dogs out for socialization anywhere in public makes learning freestyle much easier. What your dog looks like in any given move with you will not be the same as what a spectator perceives: a **team**. A handler sees only his dog and from an angle--above the dog--that a spectator never sees. Ask for knowledgeable input often to make certain that the image you wish to show is the actual image projected.

When you and your dog have a basic, trained vocabulary of movement, choreography can commence. Movements put together constitute phrases; phrases with transitions become choreography. To start, just doodle with movements that your dog knows and likes. Discover interesting combinations of movements and flowing designs through your space. Include fast and slow paces, original and required moves, single and repeated elements. Work with pauses to "frame" a move you particularly want to stand out. As you both get proficient at these exercises, think about what you most want to reveal about your dog: his lovely or humorous gait, his bouncy attitude, his drive and energy, or how flexible and athletic his body is. With his training and your *motivation* in mind, you are ready to start searching for music.

For me, the most exciting and sometimes frustrating part of freestyle training is selecting music. What I like and want is not always suited to my dog's rhythm at a trot or to his personality or

abilities. I have had to look hard sometimes for the appropriate piece. Music should run between 1.5 minutes to 3.45 minutes long, according to the requirements at each competition level. If you are truly a novice at this sport, a shorter piece will be easier to choreograph the first time you try. Choose movements and phrases your dog does well AND which work with the music. Packing every skill and trick your dog knows into one routine can detract from its smoothness. Be selective. Orient your choreography to the front of the ring and incorporate changes of direction and full use of the performance space. Movement, design, and music are integral to the whole routine. A routine that has been choreographed on paper first, with music simply added later, will lack organic flow. Routines choreographed with the music reflect the character and structure of the music.

Finally, as in all dog sports, there is no substitute for training. CFF scores artistry as well as technical precision, and **there is NO artistry without technical proficiency**. Creative movement and choreography are lost if not performed well. Don't rush into showing before you both are ready. Be open to constructive input from others. Taking the time to thoroughly train will make the final result a true joy to behold--and to perform!

You Might Be a Freestyler If ...

You and your friend exclaim over the shapes and rhythm of movement as seen in the jellyfish tank at the public aquarium.

Julia Gregory  
Chattanooga

CFF, Inc.  
c/o Julia M. Gregory  
222 Parks Road  
McDonald, TN 37353

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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**CFF Board of Directors**

**President**

Joan Tennille  
14430 Overlook Ridge Lane  
Beaverdam, VA 23015  
804-883-1174  
CTennille@aol.com

**Vice President**

Jeanine Brown  
12 Gatlin Court  
Durham, NC 27707  
919-489-0013  
jajbrown@nc.rr.com

**Treasurer**

Carl Tennille  
14430 Overlook Ridge Lane  
Beaverdam, VA 23015  
804-883-11774  
CTennille@aol.com

**Recording Secretary**

Sally Kirschenman  
5743 N, 16th Street  
Arlington, VA 22205  
703-536-7450  
skirsch122@verizon.net

**Membership Chair**

Brandy Clymire  
10603 Seven Oaks Drive  
Spotsylvania, VA 22553  
heypresto@verizon.net

**Director**

Ann Holder  
945 Indian River Drive  
Cocoa, FL 32922  
rxdogs@aol.com

**Director**

Nancy W. Smith  
3018 Pinewood Ave.  
Baltimore, MD 21214  
nsmith@dhr.state.md.us

**Director**

Fay Taylor  
809 Fairmont Avenue  
Signal Mountain, TN 37377  
gefay@bellsouth.net