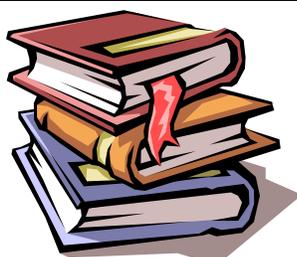


Paws to Dance



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.
February, 2012



Renee's Reading Reflections

By Renee Filep

There are many books that I read and like so much I set them aside on a “Read Again” shelf in my office. One of the few books that has actually been read (and enjoyed thoroughly) a second time is **The Art of Racing in the Rain** by Garth Stein. I *may* even read it a third time, especially since I find myself browsing through it every once in a while.

The Art of Racing in the Rain is a fictional story about a race car driver and his family as told from the vantage point of Enzo the dog. As he tells us the story, Enzo is old and dying, but it's OK because he saw a documentary about Mongolia and knows that when he is finished being a dog, his next incarnation will be as a man. Denny, the race car driver, shares advice about driving with Enzo while they watch videos about races, and we learn along with Enzo how to “drive in the rain”. Now, I am decidedly not a fan of car racing in any form, but this story is really about overcoming adversity and having that “winning attitude”. In my high school classroom, I use B.U.N.I.'s (**B**ite-sized **U**nits of **N**eeded **I**nformation), and this book contained many that I think can easily be applied to freestyle and dog training.

“Things happen in the heat of a race- a poor driver crashes. Average drivers give up. Great drivers drive through the problem; they figure out a way to continue racing and maybe win.”

B.U.N.I. #1-We've all had rough performances, especially in the lower levels. If I had quit after my first trial with Chili in Level I, I would never have experienced the joys we later found through freestyle. Overcoming the adversity makes the success all the sweeter. Additionally, I believe the essence of creativity has its roots in problem solving. My dog likes to do this, and doesn't look so great doing this, so how can I rework this phrase? How can I enhance my dog's movement here? These are all questions we've asked ourselves while training or choreographing. By pushing ourselves, we stretch

our selves creatively and develop richer and better movements and phrases.

“No race has ever been won in the first corner, but many have been lost there.”

B.U.N.I. #2- If your dog throws you a curve ball, like... oh, maybe leaving the ring unexpectedly... try to remain cool and regroup. Who knows, you might qualify after all.

“Balance, anticipation, patience, peripheral vision and knowing where you are in space are all important, but especially having no memory. No memory of what has happened a second before. Good or bad. To remember is to disengage from the present. In order to reach any kind of success in racing, a driver must never remember. I am a racer at heart, and a racer will never let something that has already happened affect what is happening now.” *“What just happened isn’t important. Let’s think about what’s going to happen next.”*

B.U.N.I. #3 - Balanced energy between handler and dog, pylons seen from the corner of our eyes, and performing in the moment; sounds like freestyle to me! But this also reminds us that our dogs live in the moment and we need to be receptive to what they do and tell us. They are half of the team, and we need to be flexible to what they offer, rather than rigid and uncompromising when the choreography is changed. *“Racing is doing. It is being a part of a moment. Reflection must come later.”*

“Some drive more by feel. They get a rhythm and trust it. But I’m very visual. I need reference points so I know where I am in space and where I’m going.”

B.U.N.I. #4 – So race car drivers use pylons too? Knowing where we are in the space is so important to organizing the movement and patterns. Getting out in a full sized performance space has often totally changed what I envisioned doing. Garth Stein is so accurate when he says *“You*

can’t really see a track from inside a race car. You have to get out and feel it.”

“One more lap. Faster!”

B.U.N.I. #5 – Dogs are like racers- when all is good, they want one more lap. Forever, one more lap. The key is to stop training before you crash and overheat. Always end when you are “winning”.

“When we were in a turn, his head was up and looking for the next turn. Where we were was a state of existence for Denny. He was happy to be there, and I was happy to be there. I could feel the joy emanating from him, the love of life. But his attention, and his intention, was far ahead to the next turn and the one beyond that.”

B.U.N.I. #6 – As trainers, we should be working ahead of where we are- looking for the next turn. So by the time we get there, we and our dogs are prepared for that challenge. Ambition is not a bad thing.

“The car goes where your eyes go.”

B.U.N.I. #7 – And our dogs go where our eyes go. When asking my dogs to back, how many times has Joan reminded me to look at their butt?

“Hands are the windows to a man’s soul”.

B.U.N.I. #8 – Our hands often convey our emotions or our energy more than any other body part and our dogs are so sensitive to our hands. That’s where the treats come from. We carry tension in our hands, which quickly transmits to the dog. Soft hands are less distracting hands.

“A driver must have faith. In his talent, his judgment, the judgment of those around him. A driver must have faith in his crew, his car, his tires, his brakes, himself.”

B.U.N.I. #9 – We, as freestylers, can’t do it alone. We need a community of freestyle. We

need people we can trust for feedback about what we are doing, music stewards and all the other volunteers vital to performance events, well-trained judges, devoted instructors and of course, our dogs.

*“I know this much about racing in the rain. It is about balance. It is about anticipation and patience. It is about the mind. The car is an extension of you, and you are the car. Together you are **everything**.”*

B.U.N.I. #10 – When freestyle is happening correctly, we and the dog are balanced. Together we as a team are greater than the simple addition of the pieces. Teamwork is everything. If you haven't read “The Art of Racing in the Rain”, I strongly encourage you to do so. It is a warm and touching story filled with bite-sized units of usable information, even if you don't drive. If you have already read it, perhaps you'll return to it from time to time like I have.

**Canine Freestyle Federation
titling event during the retreat**

**Friday April 20, 2012
East Ridge Community Center
East Ridge, TN**

Judges

Brenda Clymire Susan Colledge

Kristin Sicotte Betty Swenson

Closing date in March 31, 2012

**For information, catalog ads or trophy
donations contact the secretary Gaea
Mitchel at gemitchel@esrthlink.net or
850-556-4459**

FROM THE BOARD

The Board met by conference call Sunday, 8 January.

Retreat 2012 is shaping up nicely, and we are already making plans to present demos as well as a booth at the APDT (Association of Pet Dog Trainers) conference in Covington, Kentucky, just south of Cincinnati in October. APDT has opened a wonderful opportunity for expansion, and the past several years we have seen a lot of interest from their members.

There are exciting additions coming to the Learning Center, including a section presented by Ann Holder and Pippin on Pet Therapy visits, and possibly even a series of studies by Joan Tennille. Be sure to renew your Learning Center subscription in order to have access to updates as they are added.

We want to clarify the issue of instructors and classes listed on the CFF website.

CFF members who wish to be listed as instructors or have classes listed on the CFF website must be current members of CFF. In addition, they **MUST**:

1) have titled at Level II or above in a CFF Titling Event

OR

2) have at least two students who have titled at a CFF Titling Event.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about our organization, don't hesitate to contact a member of the board.



Guild News Staccato Notes

Misha Guild, Utah

By Susan Colledge



The Misha Guild is “lookin’ for a home.” New management in the building where we have been meeting won’t allow dogs any longer. We are looking for another site that doesn’t require an hour’s drive nor an arm and a leg.

On a happier note, Kayli has been asked to perform at the Yorkie Nationals again in May in Oklahoma City. We have a lot of work to do. She is also going to dance at a big fundraiser for ITA (the therapy group here in Salt Lake City), but that won’t be until next fall.

We are looking forward to Chattanooga in April.



Canis Major Guild

by Julia Gregory

Freestyle in Chattanooga over the last three months ... what can I say? We compete for handlers’ attention with so many other things! The holidays, a new obedience trial in town and agility seminars leave little time and energy in the local dog community. Nevertheless, we’ve continued classes at our two locations; Flintstone, Georgia (practically in Chattanooga) and Woodstock, Georgia (near Atlanta). The harmony of the working teams and joy the people and dogs find in each other make these sessions pure pleasure and ensure resistance to discouragement at every turn! The prospect of Retreat just around the corner keeps us cheerful. I’m counting on all of you to come and give us a shot in the arm by sharing your dogs and creativity with us. C’moooooon, April!



By Marcia Barkley

You might describe our December 3 titling event as “intimate” with only six teams competing, but we had the joy of seeing the first Level IV title within our Guild, won and much deserved by our Chris Bond and her Border Collie, Magic. A Level III title went to Debbie Crain and Mayo, an Australian Cattle Dog. Both Chris and Debbie are long-time members of the Gold Coast Guild, and we are very pleased to see their dedication,

effort and creativity being rewarded! Kristin Sicotte and Elaine Smith, as judges, provided good insights to the competitors in their comments. (And we had a good handful of people in the audience who were new to and curious about canine freestyle, so there was an opportunity to do a little “marketing” that day!)

The titling event was followed by our “Santa’s Showcase” which had a very good number of participants. This showcase is not part of the titling event, but provides a welcome opportunity for neophytes – both dogs and handlers – to get some exposure to the full environment of a show without the pressure of competition. We saw some very nice performances, including two new brace teams that have serious potential for future excellence.

The day after the titling event, Kristin and Elaine presented a workshop that gave us a real-life example of how canine freestyle is taught in CFF classes back East. We’ve not had much opportunity to experience Joan’s approach to teaching, and there’s no question we learned a lot. Our Guild meeting in early February will include training time, and we’ll do our best to apply this methodology.



by Dawn Madge

Baby, it's COLD out here in cowboy country! We are taking a break after our successful show in November. We will start pulling things together and training again this spring. Doogie and I are sure looking forward to the retreat and seeing everyone again. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the weather will cooperate for traveling. April can be our worst time for snow and blizzards! Happy New Year to everyone!

Inside of a Dog by Alexandra Horowitz

Book Review by Julia Gregory

With all the interruptions in my life, it took me some time to read this book (kindly loaned to me by Pam Long, owner of Ironclad K9 in Woodstock, Georgia where the Canis Major guild holds classes near Atlanta). As I neared the end of the book, I began to dread writing this review. What if I forgot something important that had been at the beginning of the book? Then I ran across something I've never seen before ... at the very end of the pages, even after the index ... an interview with the author. Upon reading the first question, I realized my difficulty was over. The author herself will now tell you about her book.

Continued on page 7

Canine Freestyle Titling Event

Sponsored by the Gold Coast Guild December 3, 2011– Napa, CA

Level I

First Place: Barbara Simpson's Aztecs Toledo Steel

Level II-B

First Place: Nancy Frensley's Finesse's Texas Ranger

Level III

First Place: Debbie Crain's Maha's Regalo Ocho de Mayo NEW TITLE

Second Place: Nancy Frensley's Hisaw Lollipop Dream

Level IV

First Place: Christina Bond's Ghostland Magic in Motion NEW TITLE

High Artistic Score

Christina Bond's Ghostland Magic in Motion

"Magic in Motion" Award for Highest Combined Artistic and Teamwork Scores:

Debbie Crain's Maha's Regalo Ocho de Mayo

Sincere and enthusiastic thanks to judges Kristin Sicotte and Elaine Nabors for fulfilling their duties with smiles and much encouragement!

Music and Goats

by Gaea Mitchel

In case anyone thinks they've heard all Jim Moore has to offer on music and its selection for a freestyle performance, let me set the record straight. The subject is deep and wide, and the more of his talks I attend the more I understand. His seminar in Winston Salem in January was a delight, as he guided us through the selection process and into the intricacies of hearing the different sections we might consider when keeping or removing phrases and combining them for a smooth, unified edit of the right length for a freestyle performance. Then Jim pulled up editing software, projected on the wall for everyone to see, and showed us how one program allows manipulation of the music file. Several participants actually did some cutting and splicing, with the rest of us offering opinions. The general consensus was that yes, some of us could learn to use the editing software, but if we wanted truly clean results Jim is our man! My personal opinion is that, if I listened that many times to a much-loved piece of music chosen for a freestyle performance, I would be so sick of it that I would *never* survive the choreographic process!

Editor's Note: And LOOK what they did the night before at the supper at Sarah's house to welcome Jim, Joan and Carl! Freestylers really know how to have fun! Photos by Sarah Jennah.



Joan and Jim with a flop-eared friend



A drink before dinner



Nutella kissing Gaea on the lips



I think she liked it!

Inside of a Dog
Continued from page 5

“What drove you to write this book?”

“I spent many years living with my own dog, Pumpnickel, and had a range of questions about her behavior and experience that will be familiar to anyone who has ever shared space with a dog: What does she do when I’m away from home? Is she bored? Happy? What does she dream about? Why does she roll in *that*? ...

... At the same time, I was working toward my doctorate in cognitive science. I became interested in what is now called ‘animal cognition’: observing the behavior of animals to get an idea of their cognitive capacities. ... Since then, the study of dog cognition has taken off: there are now dozens of academic groups looking at dog behavior. Still, most academic research doesn’t try to answer the kinds of questions I had about my own dog. I wrote the book as a way to make the recent research accessible to those interested in dogs, and to try to apply it toward those questions.”

“How is your book different than other dog books? Does the world need another book on dogs?”

“... I really don’t think of my book as a typical ‘dog book’. It is a book about using cognitive science to better imagine the minds of animals – and the animal I focus on is the dog. It is also an attempt to answer the question ‘What is it like to be another animal?’ – a philosopher’s question, but one that I think many people have about their pets ... this book is about imagining the dog’s point of view: how the dog experiences the world; what he wants and needs; what he thinks about and understands ...”

“What do you hope readers take away from your book?”

“I hope people gain a new appreciation of just how different dogs are from what we ordinarily think – and that people use this to build a new relationship with their dogs based on what the dog can understand and is interested in.”

There were two other points that particularly resonated for me as a freestyler. The first is about the relationship. “Every dog owner would agree with me, I suspect, about the specialness of her own dog. Reason argues that everyone must be wrong: by definition, not every dog can be the special dog – else special becomes ordinary. But it is reason that is wrong: what is special is the life story that each dog owner creates with and knows about his own dog.”

The second point that particularly delighted me as Horowitz made it, has to do, of course, with dance.

“... I walk in the door and waken Pump with my arrival. First, I hear her: the thump-thumping of her tail against the floor; her toenails scratching on the ground as she arises, heavily; the jungle of collar tags as she wriggles a shake down the length of her body and out her tail. Then I see her: her ears press back, her eyes soften; she smiles without smiling. She trots to me, her head slightly down, ears perked and tail swinging. As I reach forward she snuffles a greeting; I snuffle back. Her moist nose just touches me, her whiskers sweep my face. I’m home.

Here’s a possible explanation for why dogs were not the subjects of serious scientific inquiry until recently: you don’t ask questions when you already know the answers viscerally. The delight of my twice- or thrice-daily reunions with Pumpnickel is matched by their ordinariness. Nothing could seem more natural than these simple interactions: they are wonderful, but it is not a wonder that at once demands scientific scrutiny. I may as well dwell on the nature of my right elbow: it is simply a part of me, all the time, and I don’t puzzle over its helpful placement there precisely between my upper arm and my forearm, or ponder what it might be like in the future.

Well, I should reconsider that elbow. For the nature of what in certain circles is termed the ‘dog-human bond’ is exceptional. It is not just an animal awaiting my arrival, and it is not just any dog. It is a very particular kind of animal – a domesticated one – and a particular kind of dog – one with whom I have created a symbiotic relationship. Our interactions enact a dance to which only we know the particular steps. Two things – domestication and development – made the dance possible at all. Domestication sets the stage; the rituals are created together. We are bound together before we know it: it is before reflection or analysis.”

Wow! This is the kind of re-definition of the word “dance” that allows me to see with new eyes the movements my dog offers me and how I might make best artistic use of them. Let us show you how our ordinary becomes extraordinary! It also reminds me that our performance is a team effort and I should be carefully considering my partner’s input. Thank you, Dr. Horowitz!

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Paws to Dance deadlines for submission: January 25, April 25, July 25 and October 25

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