

Paws to Dance



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.

August 2022

I am all in. Are you?

By Leila Widgren

Being on the CFF board, a judge, a master instructor, and a competitor, I am all in. I have caught the CFF bug and it is a part of me. It is a part of my life. I am going to put it all out there. We (Janet & I) have been discussing our concerns about the deterioration of the membership roll for a long time.

I feel very fortunate that freestyle on the North Coast has only been minimally interrupted during the past two years +. We are and have been actively practicing and learning – weekly. That doesn't appear to be the case for other CFF guilds and friends! As I sit here on Memorial Day weekend thinking about the meaning of it, I am so grateful that many men and women gave their all so that I might have the freedoms that I do, although some of those freedoms seem to be fading away.

In the future, I don't want to be sitting here thinking about the death of CFF and having regrets that I didn't do enough to keep it!

It seems to me that we need to build up our current and past guilds and then figure out how to attract new people and keep them. Simple concept. Simple statement. One that takes active participation.

Table of Contents

<i>I am all in. Are you?</i>	1
<i>Hotel Information for the October Trial and Jamboree.....</i>	2
<i>Jamboree Information.....</i>	2
<i>North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild.....</i>	3
<i>Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events.....</i>	5

Haven't been to CFF class or practice? Don't have a routine in progress? Don't have music? Don't know how to get started up again? Want to get back into the sport that gave you goose bumps and brought tears to your eyes? Have you or your dog been missing being part of the freestyle team?

Let's figure out how to get **you** back into the swing of things. Do you have a phone that can take videos? A tripod? Good. Let's share your work and I can offer suggestions. Don't have music? I have an iPod with hundreds of songs on it.

Janet and I give feedback on routines, phrases, and doodling EVERY week. We have good CFF eyes. The next Titling Event is in October. As Janet and I always say, "That's tomorrow."

Now is the time to take a step EACH day to do something to work toward October. I am willing

to help you. Please contact me so we can get something going.

CFF needs MANY people to say that they are all in. Do you want this sport to continue? Please don't assume that it will be there when you are

ready. If not now, then when? If not you, then who?

Editor's Note: Leila's email address is: lawidgren@oh.rr.com

Hotel Information for the October Trial and Jamboree.

La Quinta Inn (Hanes Mall Blvd). 2020 Griffith Road, Winston-Salem, NC
336-765-8777 (No Pet Fee)

A block of rooms has been reserved for Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Room rate is \$116.22 (including taxes and fees).

Deadline to reserve a room is October 4, 2022. Call 1-800-753-3757. Mention **Canine Freestyle Federation** and Itinerary Number **5136B224695878** when you make your reservation. Also, mention if you will be traveling with a dog when you make your reservation.

Jamboree Information

****DEADLINE FOR EARLY REGISTRATION IS SEPTEMBER 1, 2022****

Join us for a fun-filled freestyle weekend. There are 24 working spots and unlimited audit spots. Registration fee for working or audit spot is \$140 if your registration is postmarked no later than September 1, 2022. After September 1, registration fee is \$165; deadline for registration is October 1. The registration fee also includes four meals – Friday and Saturday suppers, and Saturday and Sunday lunches. There is no reduced registration fee for auditors because most of the fee is to cover expenses such as building rental and meals. Registration information is available on the CFF website (www.canine-freestyle.org).

Janet Dayton and Leila Widgren will be the instructors. Janet and Leila are Master Instructors and DogWork Mentors-Novice Levels I, IIA and IIB. Also, Janet is the Judges Director for the Canine Freestyle Federation and Leila Widgren is the Vice-President for the Canine Freestyle Federation.

On Friday, October 28, the Jamboree will start in the late afternoon following the trial. Plans include a Canine Freestyle Federation meeting, social hour, and dinner. Also, video of the original four teams will be shown.

On Saturday, October 29, we will explore choreography, artistry, and music from Level I through Level IV. For Level I & II, your dog should be able to heel on the right and left on lead or off lead. For Level III & IV, your dog should be able to heel on the right and left, and be able to do backing and laterals in at least one direction off lead. Those with a working spot will be given a phrase to

develop at the level appropriate for their dog. Several teams will be selected to demonstrate the phrase at each level. Also, we will discuss music and how to select music for each level.

On Sunday, October 30, participants will develop a phrase for their dog using puzzle cards. For those unfamiliar with puzzle cards, puzzle cards have movements listed on the card (e.g., front work) and are placed in several categories. You will select a puzzle card from each category then develop a phrase using the movement listed on the puzzle card. For example, a set of cards might be: heel work–left side, around finish–right to left, pace change–fast, front work, and back left pylon to front right pylon. You can arrange the cards in whatever order works for you and your dog to develop your phrase. Afterwards, a judges panel will provide updates on judging and answer participant’s questions.

We hope to see you there!

North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild

By Janet Dayton

A freestyle poem by Mary Moodey

Find in Freestyle a formative
Obedience, the eyes of the handler and
Canine connecting, communicating an
Unbelievable unity: an untiring
Synergetic spirit.



An Old Dog Goes Out Dancing by Susan Klein

At nine years old, Rowan had a terrific start of his year. He finished his UD, his Herding Started, and had won Most Versatile Collie at the CCA Nationals. We were 60 points away from his MACH, and were planning on working towards a UDX. And then he stuck a front foot down a gopher hole while herding, hyper-extending his wrist. Rather abruptly, his prime-time career was done.

Rowan never did understand being put on the disabled list. This time was no different. We often did heeling doodles to music in the living room. When our working music played, he would come find me. “They’re playing our song! Come dance with me!” “Sorry, boy.” “Come DANCE with me!” “No, you’re not allowed right now.” “COME DANCE WITH ME, D****T!”

Gradually, he was allowed to do a few things. He started out as demo dog, which my social butterfly absolutely loved. When I first brought him out, I practically had to bring him down out of the rafters, he was SO happy to be working again. Our club’s Beginner classes got to see a highly trained dog show off his tricks, and demonstrate that a Utility dog doesn’t have to be a flat bored dog. To give him his weekly night out, Judy Cummings also allowed us to stay in her Utility class.

Rally was just getting rolling as a new dog sport. To learn the rules, I decided 10-year-old Rowan and I would take the Rally class. This rangy boy had never learned to back-up. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? (It's only difficult to teach them that the rules have changed!) His challenge was that he had a bit of trouble coordinating his long legs, and would get flustered. If he didn't succeed at the first attempt, trying a second time resulting in him shooting straight up into the air!

At this point, Rowan was sound enough to trial in Rally. Rowan was so happy to be at the party again! He was bouncing enough that people thought he was a MUCH younger dog. "How old is he?" "Ten." "Ten what?" "Huh? What do you mean "Ten what?"" "Ten months?" "Oh, no! Ten years!" This happened at least 3 times within a month. (Oddly enough, my current dog Beltane just repeated this routine, almost word for word!)

We wrapped up the RAE title, but Rowan was clearly obsessed by the presence of the jumps. He really missed running in agility. This dog who could do a USDAA Snooker course, where he would run by all the jumps on command, would go out of his way to take a rally jump!

I had fully planned that full time tracking would be Rowan's retirement activity. Unfortunately, he lost his nose. Occasionally, he could track for a bit, but more often than not, you could paint the track with hamburger and it wouldn't help. I suspect that he had the equivalent of acid reflux, which would likely have impacted his nose.

When Rowan was eleven years old, I had to move 60 miles for work. At the same time, Rowan just wasn't feeling himself. For a reason we never discovered, he spent 6 months drinking a lot of water. I thought he was truly retired at this point.

At twelve years old, Rowan rebounded. "This retirement is for the birds! I want to do SOMETHING!" "Well, what can you do? You can't jump, you can't track, and obedience sits aren't fun anymore." As it happened, there was a canine freestyle class being held very close to where I lived. Hmm. Maybe that is the answer? Rowan wouldn't have to do any element that he found physically difficult. Rowan's reaction? "WHY have you waited this LONG to do this sport?!" He was an absolute dancing fool!

I decided from the start that we would NOT try for titles. This was something we were doing just for our pleasure, no pressure. I love to work with and choreograph to music. Rowan loved to just MOVE with me. He very much understood that dancing was a partnership. He was an equal contributor to some of the moves and choreography we created. Our instructor commented that, more than any dog she'd ever known, Rowan got the concept of dancing.

Rowan would gladly dance to any music, as long as he was dancing with me. But just like finding the right heeling rhythm, there is usually a music rhythm or style that works better for your dog. From our previous history of doing heeling doodles to music, Rowan had already figured out what kind of music got me up and playing with him. He would react to that style of music, even if he had never heard it before. Towards the end of each class, we would try out different music to see if it suited him. Most of the dogs in class would be quite done at this point. But as long as I wanted to dance, Rowan would

happily hit the floor with me. And that's when we would find out what music he REALLY liked. When his kind of music came on, this tired old dog would pull energy from his toe-nails in order to really DANCE.

We found many "almost, but not quite" pieces of music. He perked up for the bluegrass piece "Orange Blossom Special." Unfortunately, he still thought he had a young body that could keep up with the fast pace of that music. Other pieces were too slow, or didn't lend themselves to doing a routine. I finally pulled out a piece of music that Rowan had heard only once when he was 5 years old (and had immediately dubbed it "heeling" music). As soon as it came on, Rowan, the instructor, and I all said, "This is it!" The theme from the movie "Buckeroo Banzai" became his favorite working piece, although we later found several others that also became favorites.

Shortly after he started freestyle, Rowan was diagnosed with lymphoma. As his health was otherwise good, and dogs tolerate chemo better than humans, I decided to go for the treatment. It gave us 15 more months together. (~10% of his life!) Those fifteen months weren't about goals and titles. They were about honoring the relationship that we had built. And I think that I learned more about Rowan's heart and courage in those 15 months, than I had learned in the previous 12 years.

Our touchstone throughout his last 15 months was freestyle. Rowan was determined that he WOULD dance with me. We went out dancing together every week up until 2 weeks before he passed. (At that point, car trips had become too tiring for him.) He danced with me in the living room, right up until the day he told me, "I'm so sorry, but I'm just not able to dance with you anymore."

So often, the final years of your dog's life leave you with sad memories. I am so grateful that Rowan and I found a way to keep building our relationship until the day I had to let him go. My favorite memories of him aren't of his younger athletic days, but of my old dog putting all of his heart and soul into dancing with me.

****Originally printed in American Working Collie Association's Collie Connection, Fall 2021.****

Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events

October 28, 2022

Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild and Sirius Guild Titling Event

The two guilds are planning host a one-day trial at the Winston-Salem Dog Training Club in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Regular classes, PhraseWork, and In The Moment will be offered. More information will be available soon.

October 28-30, 2022

Canine Freestyle Federation DogWork® Jamboree

The Jamboree will be held at the Winston-Salem Dog Training Club in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Registration brochure and form is available on the CFF website.

Paws to Dance
c/o Shari Bryant
627 Morgan Summers Road
Gibsonville, NC 27249

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Upcoming Events

Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild & Sirius Guild Titling Event, Winston-Salem, NC, October 28, 2022

Canine Freestyle Federation DogWork® Jamboree, Winston-Salem, NC, October 28-30, 2022

Canine Freestyle Federation Board of Directors

President

Betty Swenson
5904 Ridge Rd
Richmond, VA 23227
bswenson@bettyandjim.info

Vice President

Leila Widgren
6684 Connecticut
Colony Cir
Mentor OH 44060
lawidgren@oh.rr.com

Secretary

Shari Bryant
P.O. Box 129
Sedalia, NC
27342
Lunar61@aol.com

Treasurer

Carl Tennille
14430 Overlook Ridge
Ln
Beaverdam, VA
23015
carl23015@gmail.com

Membership

Diana Simpson
9948 High Country Dr.
Chardon, OH 44024
Disi74@roadrunner.com

Education

Julia Gregory
222 Parks Rd
McDonald, TN 37353
jmg@tnaqua.org

Judges

Janet Dayton
818 Marshall Dr.
Painesville, OH 44077
jadayton@oh.rr.com

Guilds

Kathy Noble
P.O. Box 112
Boys, MD 20841
kathyninmd@aol.com

Communications

Jeanine Johnson-Brown
9101 Decatur Ave S
Bloomington, MN 55438
Jajbrown54@gmail.com