



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2000
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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Well folks, this is being done at very short notice and still battling the flu! I am delighted with all the good ideas that have and are coming forth for the upcoming specialty: what a way to say goodbye to the old millennium! It is great to see everyone working together and this can only help the Club to grow; encouraging the pet owners to become an active part of all this is also a very positive move. Becoming a truly national interacting Club, as we move into the new Millennium, is definitely more possible. I would like to thank you all and look forward to seeing all those that can make it to P.E.I.
Sincerely, Fern Hunt

ANNOUNCING THE 2000 FUN DAY!

Barb Hoffman and Ruth Lister have offered to host another Cardigan Fun Day this summer, at their place near Elgin (north of Kingston), Ontario. For those of you who have not attended a Fun Day before, this is an informal gathering of Cardigans and their people for an afternoon of games, contests, demonstrations, good food and talking about Cardigans.

There is a choice of dates. Barb writes: "We were thinking of having it on Thursday, July 27, starting at 1:00 p.m. That's the day with no show on the Golden Triangle Circuit (Kars, Lombardy and Kingston) and this would be fun for our U.S. Cardi friends who will be at the circuit. On the other hand, it might be better to have it on a non-show weekend to accommodate those who couldn't make it through the week, say Sunday June 25. This is the weekend between the Kingston and Peterborough shows."

Please let Barb know your preference for the date by May 1 so that arrangements can be made. Her telephone number is (613) 359-6212. And do try to come on out to the Fun Day - it's fun!

CALL FOR PHOTOS FOR THE 2001 CALENDAR

Our Year 2000 Cardigan calendars were a big hit - we sold them all! - and a very successful fundraiser for the Club. Lore Bruder is getting ready to put the 2001 version together, and would like your submissions. The theme will be funny stuff: Cardigans in costume, people looking silly with their Cardi - anything that incites a grin or a chuckle. Just send Lore a snapshot (address on the masthead); it will be scanned into the computer and returned to you undamaged. (Make sure your name is on the back!) As Lore would like to be able to bring the finished calendars with her to the Specialty in PEI she'd appreciate your photos as soon as possible so she can get to work. So grab your cameras, or pull down the photo albums, and send something funny!

FIRST NOTICE: 2000 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Specialty Show in Cardigan PEI. A second notice with date and time will appear in the June edition.

OUR FEATURE STORY: THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CARDI!

This article is about obedience, flyball, agility, herding and tracking, and you should read it. I wrote it both for puppy owners who are new to the dog world, and for other readers who are not competing in performance events. Did you know that exercising your mind actually makes your brain grow? And it can even delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease? Likewise, it is good for your dog to exercise its brain. Obedience, flyball, agility, herding and tracking make your dog smarter, and may help it to live longer. These activities are fun for you and your dog. They present learning opportunities for both of you. They are good for the physical and mental health of you and your dog. And they provide social opportunities for you too.

You don't have to be some kind of master dog trainer to participate in these activities. I got involved when my puppy was three months old, and I had never owned a dog. Now that he is approaching four years of age, he has four flyball titles, two herding titles and an obedience certificate. He only needs one more qualifying score for an obedience title. I have a row of over twenty ribbons and rosettes in my office, and a dog who I can trust in almost any situation.

The Story of Me and My Dog

I learned about Cardigan Corgis through the Internet, and arranged to buy Hughie from a breeder in Oregon in 1995. I also learned about formal obedience. "Any dog of mine," I said to myself, "is going to get an obedience title." So, when Hughie was three months old, I hauled him off to puppy kindergarten. And he did pretty well. He would sit for a treat, come for a treat, and walk nicely on leash. He pretty much had the basics down. So we went into beginner's obedience. Hughie got bored. I got bored. One night in class, Hughie started barking at me to play. I had to remove him from the class that night, and I didn't go back for over a year. And then it was to a different trainer. Now that Hughie had matured and I had more experience training him, I returned to my first instructor. She is a very highly regarded obedience judge, and she trains with an emphasis on formal trials. Hughie and I earned an American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen certificate under her. Hughie and I have spent two weekends at formal CKC trials. Of the seven trials we did, we got qualifying scores in only two.

About the time that I left obedience, I went to a dog show to see a friend, and at lunch time there was a flyball demonstration. My friend told me that I would love it, and she was right. As soon as I could, I contacted a local club and got Hughie into classes. After four months of training, we entered our first tournament, and were so bad we didn't get a single point. In our second tournament we were still terrible, but we managed to get five points, and our team came first in our division. I didn't want to go to the next tournament, but went anyway. Then a miracle happened! Hughie ran almost flawlessly for two days in a row. He earned his Flyball Dog title. Since then he has very rarely made a mistake in flyball. We have been able to run on some fast teams, and now have over 5000 points and a Flyball Master pin.

Many of the people in my flyball club also run their dogs in agility. I went to classes, and Hughie really seems to enjoy it. There are only so many hours in a day, and days in a week, so I reluctantly had to put further agility training on hold. In the next month or so I plan on resuming agility training.

In 1998, Hughie and I attended the CCCC national speciality in southern Alberta. Part of the program was herding lessons on sheep. Hughie had never seen a sheep, but he went nuts when he saw other dogs working sheep. I really didn't have a clue what was going on, but Hughie seemed to know what he was doing. At one point a sheep escaped from our pen. Hughie ducked under the bars, chased the sheep down, and brought it back to me. It took me three days to wipe the proud smile from my face. It took me a couple of months to connect with a trainer in my neighbourhood, but now I travel about 150 km each way to a farm near Hope, BC for training and practise. We trialled through the summer of 1999, and earned the Canadian Kennel Club's Herding Started title and the American Herding Breeds Association's Junior Herding Dog title. We had a second place performance in a match, and a fourth in a trial.

So now Hughie's full name is C-Myste Sir Hugh Evans FM HS JHD CGC. With hard work, and a little luck, I expect that we will add the letters CD at the CCCC speciality in New Brunswick this summer, and maybe SADC some time this fall.

Obedience

The key to success in any of these performance activities is to teach your dog to follow your commands, quickly and precisely. And that is what we call obedience. Most flyball, agility, herding and tracking instructors ask that you and your dog successfully complete a beginner's obedience course before they take you on. Obedience is key. Even if you never do any other training and if you never compete, basic obedience will give you a better understanding of your dog and a closer relationship too.

Find a good trainer. The best trainers can work with many types of people and dogs. Some dogs respond well to treats, others get silly with treats, or won't work without them. Find a trainer who you are comfortable with, and who gets results. But 98% of the work is up to you. You will be amazed at what ten minutes a day can accomplish.

If you have a pedigreed dog of a breed recognised by the Canadian Kennel Club, (you do have a Cardigan Welsh Corgi, don't you?) then you may enter official obedience trials. These are arranged in three levels: Novice, Open and Utility. In competition, there are two divisions for each level (except Utility) so less experienced handlers don't have to compete against pros.

The competitions are fairly straightforward sequences of exercises. In Novice, the dog has to heel both on and off leash, must come to sit in front of the handler when called, and must move to the heel when commanded. The dog must stand still while the judge touches its head, shoulders and behind. It must stay at a sit with other dogs for one minute, and at a down for three minutes. Each exercise is worth a certain number of points, totalling 200. The dog must earn more than 50% in each exercise, and 170 out

of 200 for the trial to “qualify.” Only qualifying dogs are eligible for prizes. Once a dog qualifies three times at a level, it earns the title for that level. The titles are Companion Dog, Companion Dog Excellent, and Utility Dog.

Now this sounds very formal and perhaps a bit stifling. Well, it *is* formal, but the trials are surprisingly friendly and supportive events. Not everybody is going to be friendly, especially just before or after their turn, but on the whole, especially after you have been to a few trials, you’ll fit in.

In most regions, there are also obedience “matches.” A match is like a trial, but is for practise only. Enter a couple of matches before your first trial. Trust me. You’ll thank me for this advice later.

You can do this. All it takes is time and work. And when you have done it, you will be so proud and happy with yourself and your dog, all of the work will be well worth it.

Flyball

This is Hughie’s favourite activity in the whole, wide world.

Flyball is a relay race between two teams of four dogs each. Each dog, in turn, jumps over four hurdles, gets a tennis ball from a spring loaded box, and returns over the hurdles with the ball in its mouth. Electronic timers, similar to those used in drag racing, operate the starting lights, make sure that no dog starts early, and determines the winner.

The height of the hurdles is set four inches lower than the shoulder height of the shortest dog on the team. Successful teams usually have a “height dog” whose job is to keep the jump height low. The best height dogs are usually Jack Russell terriers, but corgis make excellent height dogs too.

Tournaments are divided into a number of divisions to keep the competition close. A team that goes too fast for its division three times is disqualified for the day. Typically, a team will race against each of the others in its division once or twice in a tournament. Each race will be made up of three, five or seven heats, or best of three, five or seven. In some regions, the round robin is followed by elimination rounds to determine the tournament winner. Each team may have up to two reserve dogs who may be rotated in or out of the four dog line-up between heats. The upshot of this is that a corgi may run between 10 and 40 times in a day. I find that Hughie gets pretty tired after 20 heats, but he has done 35, and kept his speed up pretty well.

Each time a team runs under 24 seconds in a tournament, each dog on the team is awarded 25 points. Under 28 seconds, the dogs get 5 points, and under 32 seconds, one point. As an individual dog collect points, it earns titles: 20 points for Flyball Dog, 100 for Flyball Dog Excellent, 500 for Flyball Dog Champion, 5000 for Flyball Master, and more titles every 5000 from there. Note that unlike other performance titles, higher flyball titles don’t require higher skill, just more runs. It is possible for a dog to earn its

FD in its first heat, an FDX in its first race, and it FDCh in its first tournament. It took Hughie three tournaments for his first title, one more for his second, and a whole year for his flyball championship. Now he earns 400-500 points in many tournaments.

Flyball in Canada is run by the North American Flyball Association. NAFA is a pretty good outfit. All dogs of any breed or mixed breed may compete, providing they are in good health and over 12 months of age. While the rules are uniform across the continent, the competition is not. The Canadian west coast has a reputation for laid-back and friendly racing. Prairie tournaments are said to have a lot more racing on a given day. Ontario/Michigan and California are said to take the competition very seriously. Your mileage may vary.

One of the best parts about flyball is that it is a team sport. A good team will have reliable dogs and reliable people. It is important to find a local club that you can be comfortable with.

True confession time. I took Hughie to flyball classes because I had dropped out of obedience, and wanted to prove that I could train him to do *something*. Hughie has always loved balls, and a sport that is simply a combination of jumping and fetching tennis balls is a natural for him. Even with that going for us, it took six months to get him reliable. My mistake was starting him too young. Dogs under a year of age don't have the mental focus required for this sport. More importantly, dogs under a year of age are prone to serious long-term injury because their bones and joints are not fully developed. *Do not even start training over jumps before your dog is a year old.* Teach it to fetch a tennis ball, and to catch a tennis ball when it is a puppy, and go to classes when it is older. 18-24 months is not too late at all.

Herding

Corgis are herding dogs. Many corgis want to herd more than anything else in life. Your corgi's great-great-great-great grandfather might have worked cattle in Wales. But generally, the corgis that we see today were not bred with herding in mind. There are two main elements to herding, the physical and the mental. Frankly, the modern corgi may lack both. To herd, your dog must be in top fitness to make up for its short little legs. Most corgis can be taught to herd. Many come with the basics hardwired in their brains. The key is to take the instinct, and mold it into the ability to do useful work. This may be hard, but will certainly be rewarding. When you and your corgi work sheep for the first time it will stir emotions from your primitive inner self. There is no other feeling like it. You will forget the city. You will be utterly caught up in the moment.

Find a herding instinct test in your area. Often there will be a test associated with a trial. Look around. They are usually out in the country. A good tester will be able to give you advice pertinent to your dog. Be aware that herding is probably the most prejudiced field of dog activity. Face it now: your corgi will never be as good a herder as a decent border collie. And many border collie trainers don't want to work with other breeds. So be polite if you run into such a person, and look for somebody who will help you. Remember that there are working cardis on farms. Just ask Lore Bruder or Sue Mesa. But, personally, I think CWCs make excellent recreational herders.

Not all recreational herding is done with sheep. Many people like to start with ducks. Ducks don't threaten a soft dog, and they force you to carefully control a headstrong dog. It is rare to find somebody who will let you loose your corgi on cattle.

There are many organisations that sanction herding trials. The CKC has a new program that is very well suited to corgis, and border collies are ineligible. Any CKC breed, including great Danes and Chihuahuas are eligible to compete. The American Herding Breeds Association has a good program that allows all herding breeds and herding mixes. The Australian Shepherd Club of America is supposed to be good, too, and also allows all herding breeds and herding mixes. The American Kennel Club also has a good program, but you'll have to travel to the US to compete. Only AKC recognised herding breeds may compete. You will need to jump through a couple of hoops to register for AKC events. There are also clubs that are only for border collies, and clubs that claim to be all-breed, but are really only for border collies and kelpies.

These clubs all offer different courses, different rules, different emphases and different experiences. Once you become comfortable with CKC rules, you go to an ASCA trial and get blown away. There is so much to learn. Did I mention that it is fun?

Because there are so many programs, so many kinds of dogs, so many kinds of stock, so many kinds of handlers and so many kinds of instructors, I am going to emphasise that herding may be the most fun you can have with your corgi. You should go out and try it.

Agility

Agility is obstacle courses for dogs. Dogs jump hurdles, climb over tall structures, through tunnels, drop on command, weave through a tight slalom, and have a wonderful time. It is frequently featured on the Outdoor Life Network on television. The United States Dog Agility Association Grand Prix Champion in his height class is Parker, a Cardigan Welsh corgi owned by Chris Lewis Brown. Cardis love agility, and can excel at it.

This is a sport for fit dogs and fit handlers. A good friend of mine who is overweight does pretty well, though. In fact, agility has really improved her fitness.

At least four different bodies put on agility trials. There is the USDAA, the AKC, the Agility Association of Canada and the North American Dog Agility Council. All but the AKC permit any breed or mix to compete. The rules are pretty similar between the organisations. The main differences are in jump heights. The USDAA emphasises international standards, while NADAC emphasises safety. The USDAA would have my 13" tall dog jumping 16", and that is too high for repetitive jumping. Under NADAC, Hughie can jump at my choice of 12" or (because he is on a list of exempted breeds) 8". Under AAC, there is the option of competing at different jump heights too. In AKC, most Cardis would jump 12".

Go to an obedience trial and count the competitors, then go to an agility trial and do the same. That will tell you where the fun and excitement is.

Tracking

In a couple of years, after I have retired Hughie from flyball and agility, we are going to try tracking. Al Alcock highly recommends it. He will be demonstrating his famous tracking corgis at the specialty in PEI in August, so you'll have to go there to find out what it is all about.

Just Do It

There is a saying among some dog show people that a well-balanced dog has a title at both ends of their name. That means that show dogs should be performance dogs too. If you don't have a show dog, don't let that put you off, but if you do have a show dog, please consider performance.

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Internet Resources

The Flyball Home Page – muskie.fishnet.com/~flyball/
Flyball.com – www.flyball.com
The Stockdog Server – www.stockdog.com
Herding on the Web – www.glassportal.com/herding/herding.htm
The Dogpatch Doghouse – www.dogpatch.com
The Tracking Page – personal.cfw.com/~dtratnac

Ron Stewart (Hughie's Dad!)
Vancouver, B.C.

SPECIALTY UPDATE!

Watch your mail for the premium list and special events flyer for the Millennium edition of our National Specialty Show, to be held August 16 in Cardigan, Prince Edward Island. They will be mailed soon. We have a full slate of events planned so please try to make it to The Land of Anne this summer!

TROPHY FUND

Just a reminder that donations to the trophy fund are always welcome! Our Specialty Chair, Charlie MacInnes, has ordered some very special items for our once-in-a-lifetime millennium extravaganza in Cardigan, PEI. If you would like to help support the trophy fund, please send a cheque (marked "for the trophy fund") to Al Alcock (address on the masthead). Remember: the healthier the trophy fund, the more prizes we can award!

FROM THE WHELPING BOX

Lore would also like to announce a repeat breeding of Spuddie (Ch. Caerphilly Blue Mordred) and Zing (Bluetrix Zing Here There). Puppies should be blue merle and tri-colour, and are expected mid-March. Call Lore at (403) 627-5368.

Jane Barfoot also has an older male puppy available, sable with black mask, very people-oriented. Call (519) 653-1806.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!

Yes, it's time once more for renewing your membership in the Canadian Cardigan Corgi Club! You will find a handy tear-off renewal form on the back of the newsletter. Please take a minute or so and fill it out, write out a cheque, and send to Karen Slutsken. *All memberships should be in by April 30th!*

Some of you received a "puppy membership" when you acquired a Cardigan from a Club member this year. We hope you have enjoyed receiving this newsletter, and that you will choose to stay with the Club. There are lots of ways for you to get involved in the Club if you wish. And of course you will continue to receive this great newsletter! This is the first year that our new Constitution is in effect, requiring that everyone who wants to become a new *regular* member be sponsored by two regular members in good standing. *This does not apply to current full members renewing their memberships.* It does apply to current associate, junior or puppy members who wish to become full

voting members of the Club. I suggest you contact the breeder from whom you acquired your Cardigan as one sponsor; they'll likely be happy to do it. Any other member, including an Executive member, can be the other. All of the Executive are listed on the masthead, with their addresses. Think of it as another way to keep in touch!

If you are currently have a puppy membership and want to stay with the Club, but don't care about voting privileges, you can become an associate member, in which case you don't need sponsors. Just fill out the form and send it and a cheque to Karen Slustken.

rites of passage

Some of the most poignant moments I spend as a veterinarian are those spent with my clients assisting the transition of my animal patients from this world to the next. When living becomes a burden, whether from pain or loss of normal functions, I can help a family by ensuring that their beloved pet has an easy passing. Making this final decision is painful, and I have often felt powerless to comfort the grieving owners.

That was before I met Shane.

I had been called to examine a twelve-year-old Cardigan named Belker who had developed a serious health problem. The dog's owners - Ron, his wife, Lisa, and their little boy, Shane - were all very attached to Belker and they were hoping for a miracle. I examined Belker and found he was dying of cancer.

I told the family there were no miracles left for Belker, and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure for the old dog in their home. As we made arrangements, Ron and Lisa told me they thought it would be good for the four-year-old Shane to observe the procedure. They felt Shane could learn something from the experience.

The next day, I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker's family surrounded him. Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time that I wondered if he understood what was going on.

Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away. The little boy seemed to accept Belker's transition without any difficulty or confusion. We sat together for a while after Belker's death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives.

Shane, who had been listening quietly, piped up, "I know why." Startled, we all turned to him. What came out of his mouth next stunned me - I'd never heard a more comforting explanation.

He said, "Everybody is born so that they can learn how to live a good life - like loving everybody and being nice, right?" The four-year-old continued, "Well, animals already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long."

Another quiet little gem submitted by Al Alcock