

# When Pigs Fly: You Can Do It

By Jane Killion



*Jane Killion and Bull Terrier "Zulu" Ch. TNG N  
Buoy's Concrete Blonde, ROM, VA, NA, NAJ, CLI*

© LOUIS B. RUEDIGER

For this final installment in the When Pigs Fly series, I'm going to leave you with some thoughts and encouragement about what it means to run a Pigs Fly dog and why we do it.

There have been thousands of Border Collies to earn the AKC's MACH title. Last year alone, about 238 Border Collies earned a MACH or multiple MACHs. No Bull Terriers earned a MACH in that time period; in fact, no Bull Terrier has ever earned a MACH and only one has earned a PAX. The truth is, a Bull Terrier that adheres to the AKC standard is going to find it very difficult to earn a MACH. The same is true of a correct (by AKC standards) Basset Hound, Sealyham Terrier, or any other densely made and/

or independent-thinking breed. Why do we invest such huge amounts of time and effort in dogs that will probably never get past basic titles? Why not get a competitive dog?

It can be very frustrating to sit ringside and watch the Border Collies, Shelties, and like dogs, zip through a course one after another, when you know those handlers (although they have put in a huge effort to train their dogs), most likely did not face any of the obstacles that you faced to get to this trial. Like, for instance, teaching their dog to consider staying in the ring and running the course. You can admit it although it burns you sometimes, and you seriously consider hanging it up and moving to another breed

that won't make you look like a horse's behind. I have put as many or more titles on more Bull Terriers than anyone, yet it's still not easy for me. I spent the first two years of my agility career running after my Novice A dog after she took one obstacle and then jumped out of the ring, but I was determined and I learned. Now my dogs qualify regularly, yet my expectations are not quite the same as your average Border Collie owner. The first time I brought my young male to an agility trial and he did not run away as far as he could as fast as he could the second I took off the leash, I was so happy I nearly cried. While someone in the next ring was floating on air over her MACH, I was equally giddy over the training tour

de force of my not-running-away-from-me dog. I can't even remember if he qualified or not. That speaks volumes.

But really, then, why *do* we do this?

There are people who are intoxicated with the rush of running top-level agility. These people love the technical aspect of running agility and want/need a dog that can meet the ever increasing challenges of our evolving sport. If you've ever run a great agility dog, you know that superlative feeling of competence it gives you. Suddenly, you're a genius and all your handling moves make sense. You just get smarter and better looking when you're running a fast and well-oiled machine. You might even buy a pair of stretch running pants and sunglasses. That's a heady feeling, and it's hard to resist.

Then, there are people who just love the dog they have and cannot imagine a greater pleasure than running that dog. That dog, whatever the breed or mix of breeds, speaks to them in a way that no other dog can. They're here because they want to do something fun with their dog

family. They're not wearing anything aerodynamic. Whatever they've got on, it's probably disheveled and likely has breed insignia on it.



*Erica Etchason and Newfoundland "Fozzie" Rocky Harbour Fozzie Bear CGC, RL1, RL2, TN-N, OAP, NJP*

Many have sat in whelping boxes and whelped the parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents of the dog they are stepping into the ring with. There is a history and meaningfulness to this that transcends the need to win the class.

Just being there, running, and qualifying with that animal is, deservedly, rewarding beyond measure.

I imagine that lots of you will think that I'm going to say I'm with the second group, and obliquely take to task people who jump ship and get a Border Collie. The truth is, I identify with both groups, and totally understand anyone who takes either position.

It has never occurred to me not to do agility with my Pigs Fly dogs. The gift they have given me is the gift of becoming an honest trainer. I have never, for one second, been able to fudge anything. If I'm slow or inaccurate with reinforcement or handling, I will lose my dog. I have had to master behavioral science in a way that someone with an "easy to train" breed of dog might not have to. As a result, I'm now able to help people with traditional agility breeds see their way out of training problems when they get stuck. I doubt I would have become such a good trainer and helped so many people if I had started with an easier breed.

**FPO**  
**1/4 Ad**

**FPO**  
**1/4 Ad**



© JIM POOR—THE DOG SPORT PHOTOGRAPHER

*Cookie Nee and West Highland White Terrier  
“Grace” An-Van’s Road to Glory TD RE NAP  
NJP JE TBAD TG2 CGC*



© LUIS SANTIAGO

*Mark Lindquist and Bull Terrier “Zulu”  
Ch. TNG N Buoy’s Concrete Blonde, ROM,  
VA, NA, NAJ, CLI*



© LOUIS B. RUEDIGER

*Mary Remer and Bull Terrier “Gem” Banbury  
Bedrock Bright Sky RN, NA, NAJ*

So, next time you feel a little sorry for yourself when you see a traditional breed of dog save the hide of a handler who, let’s just say, is not on top of her game, remember this: If you will stand by your dog and put in the work, you will be rewarded with a lifelong gift of becoming a masterful dog trainer.

But, on the other hand, the technical challenges in agility are really fun and it’s hard to get to be an expert handler when you’re running a cement block with legs that maxes out at 3 yps. I have been lucky enough to share my life with a couple of Cattle Dogs and they have taught me more about handling than all the seminars I have ever taken. They taught me that that I can handle advanced sequences well, that I can train verbal cues, that I can train fast weave poles, that I

can move a dog in and out of a serpentine with a slight movement of my upper body, and so on. They allowed me to drill a sequence over and over and over without tiring or losing interest, until I got it right. In short, they allowed me to perfect handling that I never would have been able to do with my Bull Terriers.

This has, in turn, given me the confidence to demand more from my Pigs Fly Dogs. I learned that really good handling is not just for fast dogs; Pigs Fly dogs respond and run better with fair and consistent handling, too. A lot of you Pigs Fly people think it doesn’t matter how you handle so long as you get around the course, but this is not true. Your Pigs Fly dog will run better if you handle better. No, I do not have a 20’ send with verbal directional cues on my dogs and I never

will. But my dogs are faster and more reliable now, thanks to the lessons that the fast dogs have taught me. I’m still waiting for my “forever” fast dog, but I will have one someday. So, if you are thinking of adding a dog of the more streamlined model to your pack, don’t feel guilty. There’s no two ways about it, it’s fun.

Although I am not taking sides with either group, this series has been about the first group, because those are the people who can get really lost and discouraged. I feel for you Pigs Fly people, and I hope I’ve thrown you a lifeline with these articles. What I ultimately want to tell you is that you can do it. You can run agility with your dog, and you don’t have to make any excuses for not getting a different breed of dog. You don’t have to listen to that instructor who dismisses

*Remember this: If you will stand by your dog and put in the work, you will be rewarded with a lifelong gift of becoming a masterful dog trainer.*

**FPO  
1/8 Ad**

**FPO  
1/8 Ad**





*Sally Fineburg and Rhodesian Ridgeback "Hudzon"  
MBIF DC Walker's Shombay of LeCreme RN, TD,  
MC, LCX, LCM2, HIC, TDI, CGC, TT, \*VC*



*Sharon Ferraro and Afghan Hound "Aiden"  
(waiting for full name and titles)*

your dog as "stubborn" or untalented, or makes you feel unwelcome. But you do have to do the work. You have more to train than the average agility team, and you have to be better at it. As many of you may have already realized, the Pigs Fly training method is really the way to train any dog. The difference is that, if you have a Border Collie, Sheltie, or Golden, you could usually get away with a lot less. You wouldn't normally have to spend oceans of time just shaping your dog to love working for you and train everything with excruciating minutia, although obviously you'd be better off if you did. But, if you have a Pigs Fly dog, you have no choice.

So, in answer to the question of why we do this, I think we all know the answer. It is that we have a profound love for our dogs, and we want to have fun with the dogs we've bonded so strongly with. As I said in my book, my biggest agility moment to this day is still, hands down, the first time I took my Novice A dog Cherry to a fun match, and she actually stayed in the ring and completed the course. Being a team with the dog that I loved was the ultimate prize and that prize is within reach of every single person reading this magazine. Cherry would never have been able to run faster than a Border Collie. However, that in no way diminished the

fact that every single time I stepped up to the line with her, I was sure I was about to run the best dog in the world and have the pleasure of taking her home with me at the end of the day.

I have really enjoyed writing these articles for you and I hope to see lots of you at trials with your Pigs Fly dogs in the future. If you see me there, you will know there is at least one person at the trial who fully appreciates your accomplishments. Believe you can do it, respect your dog for what he is, and enjoy the process. Those green ribbons are waiting out there for you—When Pigs Fly! 🐷



*Jane Killion and Bull Terrier "Zulu" Ch. TNG N  
Buoy's Concrete Blonde, ROM, VA, NA, NAJ, CLI,  
and Australian Cattle Dog "Kitty" NA, NAJ, NF*

*Jane, a breeder of Bull Terriers under the Madcap prefix, has put 18 performance titles on four different Bull Terriers and is one of only three people to have put an AX and AXJ on a Bull Terrier. Her passion is helping people who have been told that their dogs "just have an attitude" or are incapable of learning. She never trains for mere compliance—she teaches her students how to shape a dog that vibrates with happiness when training. Jane is the author of When Pigs Fly! Training Success with Impossible Dogs (Dogwise Publishing). She teaches at her home and does "Pigs Fly" seminars around the country. Contact her through her website, [www.madcapbullterriers.com](http://www.madcapbullterriers.com), or at [janekillion@yahoo.com](mailto:janekillion@yahoo.com).*

# FPO 1/3 Ad