

## **Fen Faerie Follies**

*Raelene Gorklinsky, © 2001*

There was a discussion a while ago on Corgi-L about the unexplainable way some of our Corgis are sucked into the agility tunnel when it's not the appropriate time to execute the tunnel. The conclusion was that this may be due to the siren call of invisible demons, evil faeries who are out to do mischief to the little steeds of the good faeries.

I think I can share further enlightenment about these evil little faeries. I believe the ones that suck corgis into agility tunnels at the wrong time are related to the evil fen faeries who draw tracking Corgis into muddy cross ditches and away from the legitimate scent trail. (Perhaps some of these evil creatures relocated to agility tunnels after becoming tired of living in the wet and mud of ditches in fields.)

The fen fairies tempt otherwise well-trained tracking Corgis into veering from the "straight and narrow" and into a smelly and wet swamp in the field. There's nothing that can ruin your day as much as watching your Corgi go nose-to-the-ground through several perfect legs and corners of a track, then see him be enticed into a filthy ditch and veer away from the track—and keep following the enticing odors in that ditch for more than 50 yards, activating the dreaded "whistle" that signifies the unsuccessful end of your tracking day. The fen faeries obviously enjoy the sound of a judge's whistle!

These evil faeries seem to enjoy tempting Corgis into ditches far more than they do longer legged dogs. After all, it is only mildly amusing to watch the owner of a GSD or Dal clean off their dog's muddy paws and lower legs. But the fen faeries roll in the ditch laughing as they watch the poor handler trying to wipe mud off the whole body (even top of head) of a low-rider like a Corgi. And some of us unwillingly provide the very height of merriment by having to go through this with FLUFFY Corgis who've been romping with fen faeries in muddy ditches.

## **Teach an Old Dog New Tricks**

*Jill Jones © 2000*

I am still in euphoria-land! On Sunday, November 5, I had two corgis entered at Luckiamute Dog Training Club's TD test, about 75 miles from home. Five dogs passed out of ten, and two of the five success stories were my two dogs!

Whenever I give a tracking seminar, I always suggest that people track with old retired dogs, overweight dogs, and second-hand dogs—that describes Finnegan to a T. He is an

almost 11-year-old corgi, littermate to Kernel (aka Littlefields in a Nutshell, UDTX, for those who know her); he came to live with me in January 2000, when he was causing problems in his breeder/owner's household as he was very intolerant of little toddling grandkids. He settled down at my house, seems to have accepted the fact that Kernel, as the only female in the pack, is in charge, and we decided he needed a "job" or a focus, so he started tracking.

At the tracking test, he drew Track #1, and aced his track in seven minutes. It was a lovely demonstration and I feel very privileged to have been on the end of the lead (although I have to admit that he probably didn't care who was there!). He trotted from start to finish, was very accurate on the corners—one of the easiest dogs to read that I have ever had (he is my eleventh TD dog). I think TDX would be too much for him physically, but am toying with the idea of VST work for him as he is so accurate and honest.

Back to my tracking seminars, I also suggest that tracking is a great thing to do with young dogs while you wait for them to grow up to do conformation, obedience, or agility or whatever, and then I suggest tracking as a confidence-builder for somewhat insecure dogs. This describes my second dog, Reny. He came to live with me when he was 11 months old, and although he bonded with me very, very tightly, he is sometimes a little picky about other people! So we went tracking to build his confidence! In the last few weeks, he has got faster and faster on his tracks, and test day was no exception.

The Luckiamute test tracking fields were perennial grass rows—very dangerous to klutzy handlers, but great scenting for the dogs. So I was hanging on for dear life while Reny raced his track, across those grass rows. There is no need to give him the command "Reny, run"—he has it down pat! Finally, the fourth corner turned straight down the rows, so I was able to let him go at the speed he wanted to as I could run straight down the rows too. With me holding Reny back, he took just over five minutes; I think he would have done it in four with a more agile handler! I know that speed is not a criterion for success at tracking, but it is an extraordinary sensation to be towed through the fields by a very determined and confident little dog at full gallop! Reny is now officially Vanguard Renaissance, TD, and this is the first Tracking Title for a Vanguard-bred dog. On to TDX !

## **Drawing Fun**

*Raelene Gorklinsky © 2000*

There are so many things that make tracking fun. Clubs putting on tracking tests go to great efforts to make them memorable. Even the "little things" are seen as an opportunity for creativity—including the draw for track number.

First thing on the day of the test, all the entrants take part in a random drawing to see which track each will get. Being new at entering tracking tests, I had assumed this would be a basic procedure of picking a folded slip of paper out of a bowl or hat. No, that would be just boring. Clubs come up with clever ways to do the draw. At Luckiamute's test in November, there was a tray of gift bags: hazelnuts for the handler and a big biscuit for the dog. You picked a bag, and your track number was on the bottom. A week later at the PDOC test, there were stuffed squeaky toys with the track number written on the tag. So every dog got a "prize" whether they passed or not! One participant there told me about competing a few years ago at a test on Halloween weekend: someone at the host club put a lot of time and effort into carving pumpkins—each entrant picked their favorite jack-o-lantern off the table, and the track numbers were written on the bottom. Little touches like a special "draw" are what make tracking so fun.

On November 11, 2000, at Portland Dog Obedience Club's Tracking Test, I pulled a stuffed lamb out of the bag—track #7. Phoenix put his nose down to the ground and his ears up in the breeze and confidently trotted through four turns and 470 yards to the glove and his TD!

## **Training to Do WHAT?!**

*Raelene Gurlinsky © 2000*

I'm finding out a lot about training dogs while learning tracking with my Corgis. However, I think I'm learning even more about people than I am about dogs. Because you need lots of open space to do tracking, practicing is often done in public parks. That means having to deal with all the other people who are using that park for hiking, biking, picnicking, and partying. And plenty of those people stop and wonder just what weird thing we are doing with our dogs out in the middle of that field.

Even though I try to work at the less used, out-of-the way fields, there is the problem of people coming along with their dog(s) and starting across a field where I have laid a track. My novice dogs don't seem much bothered by cross-tracks from people, but cross-tracks from other dogs throw them off. Plus the problem of the other dogs gobbling up the food drops on the track or chewing on the glove—my guys still need that food to motivate them, and get furious when all they get is the smell of no-longer-there food combined with the scent of another dog. Obviously I can't forbid other users of a public park to walk in "my" field, so I try to be polite and sincere and briefly explain what I'm doing, while asking if they'd mind going another way or waiting a bit before walking in this field. One of my techniques is to express concern for their dog—"Well, you see, there are food drops of hotdog pieces (or whatever I'm using that day) along the trail, and I know that some dogs have sensitive stomachs and shouldn't eat that. I'd feel really bad if your dog picked up this food from the ground and got sick." This generally works, as people appreciate the concern for their pet.

And then there was the day... The track was laid and aged, and we were just leaving the starting flag when a young man and his large dog emerged from the woods on the other side of the field and started across. I called out to him, something like “Hi, hold on, can you stop there?” He stopped, and I proceeded to shout across the field my explanation about tracking training and food drops, and that I’d be through in just a few minutes if he could please wait before coming across. All while trotting behind my dog, who was eagerly on the trail. The young man didn’t come any further on the field, but he obviously couldn’t quite understand what I was talking about and called back “What?” several times. I shouted back the “food drops/don’t want your dog hurt” explanation again, then concentrated on my dog.

We finished the track and walked back along the edge of the field toward the man and his dog so I could thank him. As I approached, I noticed the expression of horrified fascination on his face. “What did you say you were doing?” he asked. So I repeated about training dogs to track by scent, and having food drops in the field. “Oh!” he said as relief spread across his face, “I thought you said there were BOMBS in the field.”

So if we don’t succeed in our TD goal, I’m going to contact the airport security police and check into the training for those sniffer dogs.

## **How Could You Tell?**

*Raelene Gorklinsky © 2000*

Phantom hadn’t been tracking in several weeks, due to a sprained leg. He is a very enthusiastic tracker, so he was raring to go when I finally took him out again.

I had laid a track in a big, long field in the park, next to a heavily used biking/hiking trail. I was putting on Phantom’s harness when two cyclists stopped to admire—“what adorable dogs, what kind are they”. Then they asked what we were doing. As I led Phantom toward the starting flag, I explained AKC tracking to them. I put a wiggly and impatient Phantom on a sit-stay at the flag while we chatted, and they asked if I minded if they watched. (I now know better than to go to the flag unless I am actually ready to start.)

I was explaining that we were still fairly new at tracking and Phantom hadn’t practiced in a while so “he may have to scout around a bit to find the scent and he could have trouble locating the turns—Yiiiiikes!” Phantom had lost all patience with us and taken off at a full gallop—he was there to Track, not Talk. He raced down the first leg (blowing right by the food drop), made the corner perfectly, charged along the second leg, ached another corner... I was running flat-out, hanging on to the end of the 40-foot line, hauling back for all I was worth, but I know I couldn’t have stopped him and I doubt I even slowed

him down. I was grateful that we were down to a very brisk trot on the third leg. Phantom got to the glove, got his reward, and we were walking back within six minutes of starting.

Now, you have to picture this from the view of our unplanned observers. This 27-pound, 11-inch high dog is dragging a size extra-large woman across a field at a full racing sprint. In the middle of the field, for no apparent reason, the dog makes a sudden right-angle turn. A hundred yards later, he does it again... and again... eventually ending with the dog throwing himself down on the ground and the woman collapsing next to him and shrieking “Glovey! Here’s your glovey! Good glovey!” (Yes, it’s embarrassing, but it works.)

So we got back to the starting point, both Phantom and I still panting. The cyclists watched us silently while I poured a dish of water for Phantom and gulped down my own bottle of iced tea. Then one of them tentatively asked “So, could you tell if he was able to find the scent?”

Uh, yeah, I think he did pretty well.

## **Aliens Return Missing Corgi!**

*Raelene Gorlinsky © 2000*

News Flash from the National Dog Enquirer:  
(Tales of the Weird and Wonderful in the World of Dogs)

Phantom is Back; Alien Replacement is Gone  
(See page 3 for related article on return of Elvis.)

Some time ago, Ms. Raelene Gorlinsky reported that her Pembroke Welsh Corgi, “Phantom”, had been kidnapped by aliens and a look-alike-but-not-act-alike clone or android left in his place. According to Ms. Gorlinsky, this event occurred on the evening before Phantom was scheduled to take his first tracking certification test. “I knew right away something was wrong” claimed Ms. G. “Phantom is a ‘born to track’ dog and had been doing marvelously in training. Then that night he started acting like a berserker, and the next day his behavior at the certification attempt was totally alien—he’d never been like that before while tracking. The odd behavior has continued at tracking practices since then. He would become frantically overexcited, run wildly around in circles, and act like he had no idea how to find a scent or follow a track. This was not my dog! It was another dog who looked just like him but had no tracking training!”

Ms. Gorlinsky has been struggling along with the Phantom clone, hoping she could instill some basic tracking behavior in him, but with limited success. “I think this alien dog had never seen Earth grass before, so when I took him out in the field he would become so excited he couldn’t work. We’ve been practicing, and some days he seemed to get it, but

then he would be overcome by his hysterical alien nature again. Of course, the summer heat affected him terribly—maybe his home planet is very cold?—so we had not been able to practice as much as I would have liked.”

Then today, the old Phantom was back. “I noticed right away that something was different. When I took him toward the start flag, he was enthusiastic but in control. At the ‘Go Track’ command, he started off briskly in the correct direction—no wild circling or acting like he had never heard of the concept of tracking before. He proceeded at a very brisk clip, but not the out-of-control gallop that he displayed these past few months. He did a 400-yard track almost perfectly. And then he did a ‘down’ at the glove without waiting for the command from me—wonderful article indication. I couldn’t believe it! I was so overjoyed to have my real dog back!”

Ms. Gorlinsky told this reporter that perhaps the aliens decided to return Phantom because she moved back a few steps in her training program in order to try to get Phantom back ‘on track’. Today’s track was aged only 30 minutes (compared to the hour they had been practicing when Phantom was dognapped by the aliens) and had much more food than she had been using. “Half a chicken heart every 50 feet is a small price to pay to get my little tracking star back.” sobbed the overjoyed owner. Ms. Gorlinsky is concerned the aliens may try to “swap” dogs again. She is planning to track again within a few days, as a test to see if the real Phantom is still here.

## **So Your Corgi Needs a Tracking Harness**

*Chris Robinette © 1999*

You have heard that tracking is a terrific dog sport: very positive and exciting for your dog; good exercise while enjoying nature’s bounty for you. You think about giving it a try. You have seen pictures of dogs tracking and they are not wearing collars, they are wearing harnesses. Hmmm, a harness. You check out your rather extensive collar collection and find the following:

(1) A choke collar with too-large loops purchased at Petsmart before you ever went to a training class and didn’t know what to buy. This piece of metal did look like something to “train” in. Not used since your dog’s first handling class when he was 6 month old; your dog is now 8 with a UD but that collar lingers as living proof of your extensive packrat tendencies. You make plans to find it a new home with one of your many training friends with golden retrievers; you’re not sure if it’s what they use or not, but it looks big enough and at least you can unload it there.

(2) Three fine-looped choke collars that work great in obedience. You used to have only one until it broke at a match on a rough about-turn, causing your dog to blow the heeling exercise, and prompting you to buy two backups at the next dog show you attended. You

have two sizes because Corgis have proportionately large heads and the challenge is to get the collar over their head and still have the smallest possible amount of chain hanging down afterwards. Spent two hours at one dog show going from booth to booth trying on vendor collars and rejecting those that almost sheered off said Corgi's ears. A little hanging chain will have to do.

(3) One pinch collar scattered in pieces in the bottom of your old training bag; a relic from your dog's two-year-old year when he pulled you through the fairgrounds parking lot and the trainer handed it to you without even bothering with the discussion. He was neutered at two-and-a-half.

(4) A thin, black nylon slip-collar. Saw one at the vet's, seemed smart in 1994, haven't used it since.

(5) A bright-blue buckle collar and bright-blue lead that were a present from the pet therapy program. Unused. Lead is too long and they look too fresh and pretty for regular walks down your rainy gravel driveway.

(6) Regular buckle collar in three colors: light green, bright blue, purple. Functional; hangs permanently from long red flexi. Your standard walking setup. Replaced the prior red one that was "skunked" by Peppy La Pew in 1996 on one memorable midnight trip around the yard and never recovered.

TOTALS: One dog, 8 collars, 0 harnesses. This lineup looks like I am into control but not into tracking. I need a harness!

Tracking harnesses may be of any color. Most people like to choose a color that complements their dog. The most important part of choosing a harness is the design. A proper tracking harness makes a 'V' on the dog's front chest and has a strap that goes from the bottom of the "V" back between the dog's front legs. You do not want a harness that constricts the dog by having a horizontal chest strap that crosses over both shoulders.

There are a variety of sources of harnesses and a corresponding range of prices. As long as the design is proper, any harness will do the job. Here are several sources of harnesses:

1. Discount pet supply stores. These harnesses come in bright colors and are economical to purchase.

2. J and J Dog Supplies. PO Box 1517, Galesburg, IL 61402-1517. 1-800-642-2050; [www.jandjdog.com](http://www.jandjdog.com); [jandjdog@galesburg.net](mailto:jandjdog@galesburg.net). They have been a popular source of training equipment for years. They carry both leather and black nylon tracking harnesses in their catalog. The leather is more expensive (about \$30 vs. \$15); either material will do.

3. Nordkyn Outfitters. Rip and Jane Riffle, PO Box 1023, Graham, WA 98338-1023. [www.nordkyn.com](http://www.nordkyn.com); [nordkyn@nordkyn.com](mailto:nordkyn@nordkyn.com); 1-800-326-4128. They make beautiful,

custom harnesses in a wide variety of colors. If you call them and talk to them about what you are looking for, they will design and produce it specifically for your dog. In the \$30 range.

4. Premier Pet Products have beautiful dog harnesses in many solid colors and patterns. They also carry harnesses for other animals, such as a hot pink harness for your cockatiel or a lime green one for your ferret. They have a lovely catalog displaying the choices. Premier products are sold wholesale through dog trainers; contact me or your trainer for more information. Exact prices depend on your source.