

Agility

From dog phobic to dog manic

Supplied by Rosemarie Baker, rjbagility2020@gmail.com



Lyn, Jayme, Sascha & Lofn

Lyn Sayers credits his sister Marion as responsible for his entry into the magical world of dogs, which in turn led him into Agility.

Mim, as Marion was affectionately nicknamed, had several dogs during her married life. One of the last of these was one of the not-so-nicest Sydney Silkies you could ever dread to meet. He didn't have any positive opinions of humans and retained a special place in the nasty part of his brain, especially for Lyn.

When he passed, Mim announced to the family that she was embarking on a year-long mission to find the 'perfect dog'.

Lyn's derisive retort rang loudly as he was by now firmly in the 'no dogs' camp, the result of many confrontations with Mim's nasty Australian Silky Terrier. As a teenager it was Lyn's job to deposit the meat delivery from his father's butcher shop into the customer's home refrigerator. However, the resident 'wild wolves' had other ideas and would take it upon themselves to block Lyn's path to the back door. Consequently, Lyn proclaimed there is no such thing as the perfect dog and that all canines were one of God's less funny creations — like crocodiles and sharks.

All that changed at Christmas 1998. Lyn travelled to Christchurch to attend the wedding of his niece, Mim's daughter.

Mim had just taken delivery of a Miniature Schnauzer named Meldrew. Despite his reservations and proclamations, Lyn found himself spending most of the following two weeks rolling around on the floor with his new furry friend, and the rest is now

part of Sayers family folklore.

The love affair that blossomed was so great that Lyn quickly visited Meldrew's breeder, and within a few weeks, he owned a Meldrew sibling, who he named Jasper. Jasper was every bit as alluring as his brother. Smart and ready to learn, he easily passed the obligatory puppy preschool in Lower Hutt. This spiked Lyn's hunger for more classes, and they enrolled in the advanced puppy school at Avalon Dog Training Club. One evening, during Obedience class, they spied a group of folks running their dogs over, under and through what looked like miniature equestrian equipment. Lyn's Agility career was born.

It transpired that Jasper was not as keen on Agility as Lyn. And sadly, Lyn also discovered that Jasper had an inherited liver disease which, whilst corrected with major surgery, meant Jasper never found the connection to Agility and running fast, and many times missed out on an ADX qualification due to time faults.

Lyn feels it was Jasper's problem with the A-frame that led to the search for a truly non-skid surface for dog ramps. One particularly upsetting memory was in 2000, when Jasper nearly made it to the top of their club's marine carpet-coated A-frame, when he slid backwards all the way to the bottom, friction-burning his paws in the process.

It was when Lyn and his second Miniature Schnauzer Jenna were selected to appear in the *Tux Wonder Dogs* TV series in the early 2000s that

Did You Know?

Where to find your Club AC representative: www.dogagility.org.nz/contact/AC_Contacts.html



Phoenix spread.

Dog walk ready for Australia.

they visited a farm in the Rakaia Gorge where Lyn took notice of a garden bridge coated with black rubber chips. It was extremely wet that day but the bridge's steep bridge was not at all slippery. A huge amount of desk research followed and led ultimately to the development of Contactacoat® surface coating system. Rubber chip coating of various forms have spread throughout the Agility world, and Lyn cautiously claims that we have Jasper to thank for this leap in dog safety.

eagerly looking for a way out. Lyn was keen to help Leonora fulfil some of the items on her to-do list and took over as President.

Jasper did not enjoy a long retirement. Though he had led the Sayers down the path to Agility addiction. Luckily, Jenna had a huge passion for the sport and despite all her runs in an era before split classes, in 2009 she did achieve Agility Grand Champion in Whangarei just days before Lyn's wife Denyse passed away after years of chronic illness.

The club had a mini-forest of wilding pines to deal with, two ancient clubrooms, and a working area too small to accommodate three rings. After many applications for charity support and a number of years later we ticked off the to-dos, developed new clubrooms, updated the kitchen, built a large deck and installed a new gear store. After five years and learning from Leonora's example, Lyn found someone younger and keener to take the reins.

During Lyn's early Agility years in Lower Hutt, he became President of the then Zone 3 Dog Agility Club, and it was during his leadership tenure that Dog Agility Wellington Group was born. He later had a stint at Upper Hutt Dog Training Club where his third Miniature Schnauzer, Jayme, learned her strong foundation in Agility. He credits much of her success at the sport to the grounding gained under the tutelage of Fiona Hodgson. Jayme, at the time of writing, is now in her 16th year and competed right up until she turned 12.

Taupo had become the dream lifestyle and adding to this a little later he married 'the widow next door', Sarah. This enormously happy time of his life also saw the early dabbling in the manufacture of Agility equipment, which has led to something of an addiction as well. It's fair to say Lyn has a substantial amount of experience with all aspects of agility which has enabled him to continue equipment development. Agility Stuff Ltd (www.agilitystuff.co.nz) employs Lyn and Sarah, virtually both fulltime, making a wide range of equipment.

Now well ensconced in the Agility life Lyn decided to try his hand Agility judging, which he started mid-2002. He has judged at national events in New Zealand and overseas in Singapore and Australia. Judging in Australia was a challenge since Agility there is quite different to in NZ.

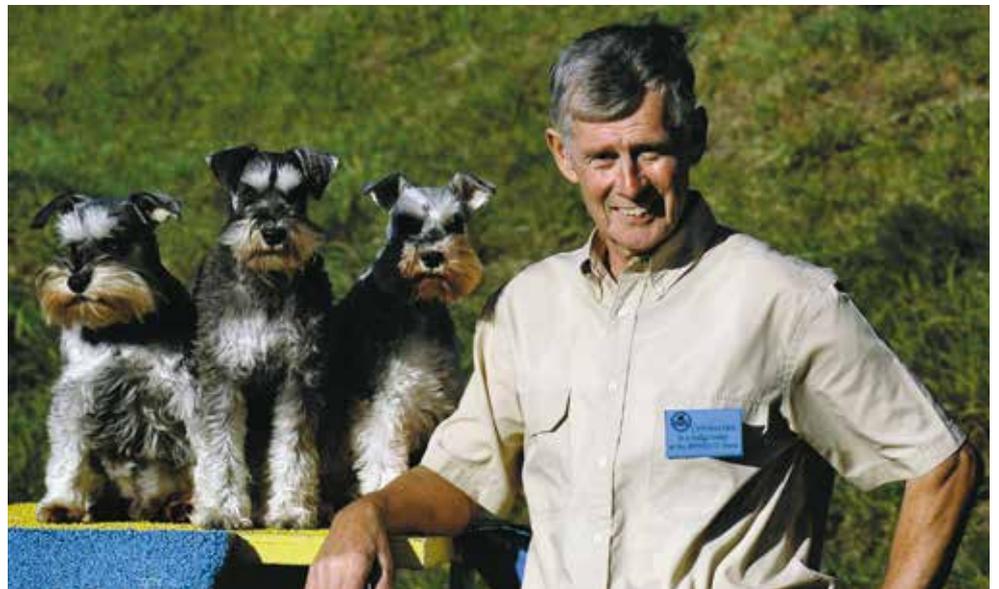
Despite the innovative changes Lyn has applied to the equipment design and function, his proudest achievement in terms of dog safety is the development of Contactacoat rubber chip coating for dog ramps. The concept of rubber chip coating is now the standard against which other surfaces are compared. Lyn and Contactacoat featured in the March 2006 of this magazine (as *New Zealand Kennel Gazette*). This provided the dog community an excellent understanding of the product and how important it was to Agility.

His courses have become popular over the years with requests to send courses after show weekends. Lyn went one better than that, providing course sheets outside the rings he judges. People just love it.

Now with 20 years judging under his belt, Lyn still enjoys it and very rarely turns down a judging invitation.

Between 2008 and 2011 Lyn was voted onto the first Agility Committee, serving four years as Chair. During that time he was instrumental in developing the unique dog numbering system.

At regulation retirement age in 2012, Lyn moved to Taupo, presenting himself for duty at Taupo Dog Training Club shortly thereafter. The president at the time was Leonora Mellso, who unbeknown to Lyn had served many fruitful years and was



Lyn from the March 2006 *New Zealand Kennel Gazette*.

He rates as his second-best achievement, the discovery of FarmTek Agility Timing Systems, for which he became the New Zealand agent. This is now essential to aiding the smooth running of events and it would be hard to imagine an event run the old way with a pair of hand stopwatches.

One of the most useful products that they have developed for dog training is the unique Z-shaped 2x2 weave trainer bases and bridges. They are aware that hundreds (maybe thousands) of dogs have perfected the art of fast weaves using this product, with ease and enjoyment.

In addition, the very popular Phoenix Wing hurdles, the Phoenix Blind, and Phoenix Spread, have all added colour, safety and functionality. The Phoenix division of Agility Stuff is now in the hands of Sarah, leaving Lyn to skive off and dream up new reasons for not retiring. And last, but not least, there has been a rash of other equipment developed like dog measure sticks, tunnel collars, competition weaves and a bi-directional long jump.

Their latest project is the production of ultra-light-weight Agility ramps, which has resulted in the destruction of any last remaining free time. Lyn and Sarah are none-the-less happily nestled in a slice of paradise just north of Taupo, enjoying the sport, and doing their best to contribute to its ongoing success and development.

For those lucky enough to see the production line in motion, the care and attention to detail Lyn and Sarah put into equipment assembly is second to none.

Who knows what equipment developments the future holds? 🐾

Thank you to article contributors Lyn Sayers, Jude Taylor and others.



Wing Jumps packed ready for NZDAC