

Seminars

This has been my year for agility seminars and I have attended several wonderful ones. However, the best one was unplanned and really not on my “list”. I was told by a friend that instead of staying home for one weekend and *resting*, I should get off my duff and see about attending this certain seminar. She had I heard that there was a last minute opening. She also mentioned that Connor and I needed some work coming together as a team (understatement!). So, I emailed just for the heck of it and got in (there went my house-cleaning agenda, once again!). Some things just fall into place and this was one of them. Have you heard the philosophy that “*we may think we are teaching the dog one thing, but in truth, the dog is learning something entirely different*”? Well, one of the best lessons I took home from that seminar fit that philosophy perfectly. Except this philosophy applied to me! The three day seminar was divided into three groups of about 10 people with a different instructor for each group, each day. My group included all Border Collies, one Sheltie and one Miniature Schnauzer – Connor! Talk about odd man out. I thought oh, boy, this will be hard - they’ll hate the two little dogs. Because I was a late participant, I didn’t know the names of the people in my group till that first morning. When I read the list and saw the handlers, I was blown away. They were world team members, prominent seminar givers themselves and other wonderful handler and dog teams. I was definitely in over my head with these guys! Thank heavens the day started with the big dogs working first. What an eye opener it was watching these fantastic trainers, handlers and instructors in their own right, turn into students. Their mistakes were the same as mine! They had the same learning curve I do! They stumbled, goofed, laughed and tried again. I was so impressed with the trainers in my group, it changed me forever. For three days I watched how these individuals treated their dogs, processed new ideas and tried and tried to get it right. They put in to practice what they teach and it was thrilling to watch their dogs respond to them.

I don’t think I’ll ever be nervous again attending a seminar and feeling that “all eyes are on you” type of nervousness. I will try my darndest to take their lead and work with my dog and help my dog thru my learning curve so that in the end we will both be better for it. Being a student is a good thing for all of us, even the best in their field seem to know that. It is a lesson I hope I never forget.

And, by the way, you may be wondering how the “real” seminar was. It was simply the best I’ve ever attended! I felt comfortable and was able to learn – I had such good examples to follow in my group. I kept my dog happy and worked with him and did not worry about how I looked or worry about making an error or my dog making an error. Heck, the course sequences were set up to almost force to us make mistakes, and then learn from them! We all made many of the same errors – we were *all* students. It was wonderful learning *more* than what was being taught !

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