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# Barrow County News

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## Barrow County News COMMUNITY

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# WOOF

*It's a dog's life — filled with family and career*

By Carman Peterson  
Barrow County News

Some people define success by family; others define it by career; others by fame. For Hank Gallups, each of those definitions of success can be found in Jill.

Jill is a 17-year-old Border collie who spent most of her life herding sheep for Gallups. Her early life was less idyllic — until she was three, the pedigreed pup was passed from home to home. Although her blood lines traced her to champion Border collie Winston Cup, Jill didn't connect with any of the families who tried to make her a successful show or working dog.

That changed when her path crossed with Gallups'. Gallups was familiar with Jill — he had already bought one of her pups from a breeder — and when he found out the three-year-old was once again for sale, he decided to see what she was capable of.

Gallups was impressed with her sheep-herding skills, but what Jill did after the demonstration sealed the deal.

"She came right up beside me like she'd always known me, and we've been together ever since,"

Gallups said.

The timing couldn't have been better. Gallups, a musician by trade who had trained animals as a hobby since childhood, was in the process of becoming a professional herding dog trainer.

"When I first got in to this business I didn't know a lot about sheep. I grew up on a farm and we had cattle, so I didn't know much about sheep and how they



react, but she did," Gallups said. "Jill helped me. It was like living in a Walt Disney movie every day ... She got me through those years and beyond."

Although Jill achieved moderate success in the show circuit, Gallups said she herds better by instinct than command.

"She excels at being a natural farm dog," he said. "I never had a job that didn't get done with her."

Some of Jill's feats, he admits, are hard to believe. In her peak, he said he could point out specific sheep in a herd and she would draw them out for him one by one.

She also saved Gallups from

embarrassment during one of his first training clinics. He had just started the session when the sheep spooked and managed to escape from their round pen and into the woods.

"It was my first time in the area and I didn't know where the woods led to," Gallups remembered. "I was in a panic mode — all of those people had come there to learn, and without sheep, the clinic was dead. I ran over to where Jill had been watching and said to her, 'come-by.' She took off though the woods in the direction where we had seen the sheep last running ... I waited a few minutes which seemed like forever, and just about the time I figured I had better say something or explain, I looked around and here comes Jill up from the woods with sheep running towards me. She was bringing [them] straight to me and in the pen they went, right where they had left from. You can't imagine how relieved I was ... and needless to say, anything that I said about training the rest of the day was taken as law. No one questioned anything I had to say."

Gallups held many of his clinics at the Williams Harris Homestead in Monroe, where he and Jill would also conduct herding demonstrations for tourists and school children. Gallups said Jill's calm personality and herding skills made her very popular with the students.

"She was a hero," he said. "All the kids were talking about her, drawing pictures of her."

Jill completed her last school demonstration a few years ago, before deafness and old age forced her retirement.

"That broke her heart, I know, because for years after that every time she saw a school bus she would think the kids were

coming to see her," Gallups said. "She always loved people and people loved her. I would take her to nursing homes and she would sit and let those folks pet her for hours, going from one person to the next. It was a win-win type of thing; she loved being petted and they loved just having her near them."

While Jill now spends her retirement years away from the bustle of the herding world, Gallups has four generations of her descendants to train. Some of them, he said, have competed successfully in dog trials on the national and international level, while others have been featured in commercials, TV specials on herding, and even in the feature film "Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius."

"They mind a lot better," Gallups said of Jill's star-studded descendants, "but none of them really have what she has."

"She's just been a phenomenal dog," he explained. "I tried to breed dogs like her, I tried to train them, and — I don't know — dogs like this just have to be born. You can't make them."

Gallups has written a children's chapter book, "Jill the Border Collie," about Jill's early years. He is currently seeking a publisher, but hopes the story will resonate with readers.

"Jill will never understand the story, but maybe other people will, because to them, their dog is just as special," he said. "Even if their dogs just lay around the house and comfort them when they're sad, they're just as important to them as she is to me. She has enriched my life, and the lives of so many others."

To learn more about Jill and her descendants, or about Gallups' dog training clinics, visit [www.hankgallups.com](http://www.hankgallups.com).



Special Photos Barrow County News

Dog trainer Hank Gallups and his Border Collie, Jill.