

## **This is a Borderlines Interview with Gerianne Darnell about Raymond in 2010.**

My first "Conversation With Champions" dog was my wonderful QUAD CH Riva. I also have a five-year-old Border Collie, DC Rick, who is working on his MACH and will be debuting in utility this fall. I think Rick could be my next QUAD CH. But between the two of those dogs has been a VERY special Border Collie named Raymond, V DC UCDC UR01 Ettrick On Edge UD RAE HXAsd HXBd HIBs NA NAP NJP, TN-O. Raymond had a severe injury as a puppy, requiring three surgeries by the time he was two years old. He has always been an inspiration to me, because he does not have an intact biceps tendon in his left shoulder, as it was severed by a screw after his first surgery. Raymond is now nine-and-a-half years old, and he is still working in tracking and UKC rally.

Raymond taught me that success in obedience does not necessarily equate to High in Trials and OTCH's, but instead success is all about the relationship and persevering to reach your dreams.

How did you acquire Raymond?

Raymond was purchased in 2001 as a six-and-a-half week old puppy from Kathy Knox of Ettrick Kennels. His sire, Ettrick Bob, won both Meeker and the USBCHA National Finals, as did his granddam, Hannah.

What happened to Raymond that resulted in the surgeries?

When Ray was four months old he got both feet stuck in the slats of a wooden lawn chair. I struggled to get him out, and I finally had to call my husband on the phone to run over from his vet clinic to help me free Raymond. My husband had to actually break the chair off of Ray's feet, and it was very traumatic for all of us. Intermittent lameness started shortly thereafter, and I then began a year-and-a-half odyssey trying to find a diagnosis. Ray was finally diagnosed with shoulder instability and had the first of three surgeries in January of 2003. The first surgery necessitated cutting the biceps tendon and reattaching it to the shoulder with a screw. The screw pulled out three weeks later, shredding his biceps tendon, and Ray had his second surgery in February. That surgery involved two screws and a figure 8 suture around them, which resulted in completely limiting Ray's extension on his left side. The screws were removed in May, and Ray then spent a month at TOPS Veterinary Rehab in Chicago.

Had you already started training him before that happened? Did he have titles in progress or just starting to be trained?

Oh yes, we had done a lot of training to that point. I had started him in tracking and obedience, and he had a good foundation with his herding training. We had also done quite a bit of agility work. Ray had eleven points and a major in just a handful of shows at the time of his first surgery. But, all of his titles came after his surgeries.

What was the vet's prognosis at the time of the surgery?

The surgeon told me at the time of the first surgery that Ray had an 80% chance of a full recovery, and since the vet had done many shoulder instability surgeries, I was feeling very positive about the outcome at that time. However, I don't think the surgeon had ever done the instability surgery on an extremely active, working dog. I'll always wonder what Ray would be like now if I had not done that first surgery, but both the surgeon and I did the best that we could.

Did you have to do any special recovery?

Oh my goodness, where should I start? 😊 Immediately after the removal of the screws I drove Raymond up to Chicago to spend a month with Dr. Laurie McCauley of TOPS Veterinary Rehab. Ray had acupuncture, chiropractic, Pulsed Signal Therapy, massage, special exercises, laser treatments, underwater treadmill, the list goes on and on! I could have bought ten more Border Collies for what that cost me, but it was worth it to me as I don't think Ray would have been able to recover to the point that he did without it. After Ray come home we started very slowly bringing him back to training-level shape, with many setbacks along the way. I also made the trek up to Chicago every six to eight weeks for a long time. I kept a detailed spreadsheet with a column for every activity Ray did, including how many reps of which exercises he did, and I then rated his lameness each day on a scale of one to ten. I also invested in a pool for swimming therapy. The first two winters I struggled to heat the pool inside my obedience building, and despite a lot of research we never really did find a cost effective way to do it. Ray has been adjusted at least every four to six weeks throughout his entire career, along with acupuncture when he needs it and massage every two to three weeks. And of course I'm always looking for the latest in "wonder" supplements. I continue to do what I can to make him comfortable and happy.

How can a dog compete without the biceps tendon?

That sounds strange, doesn't it? But the surgeon told me that the body is full of redundancy and compensation, and that he would do fine without it. I still don't quite understand it!

Why did you decide to keep working him after the surgeries? What did you see in him that made you say ... I have to keep going!

I never once faltered in my desire to keep Raymond going. The desire and work ethic in this dog was like none I had ever seen before. He HAD to work, and I owed it to him to give him that chance. I did make the very painful decision (for both of us) to retire him from agility shortly after his novice agility career. I knew that I could do "everything" with him for a couple years or I could do obedience, herding, and now tracking until he was ten years old. To this day, six years after retiring from agility, he will run up to the agility building door and look back at me while wagging his tail. That said, I still run him in NADAC tunnelers whenever I can, and I've even done NADAC Jumpers at the skilled veterans twelve-inch jump height, and we both have a ball. Raymond was a ballistic agility dog, and the possibility of him really hurting himself and not being able to do ANYTHING was very high if I had continued on with the agility, but that didn't make it any less painful to quit. My current agility dog, Rick, is Raymond's son. In addition to Rick, Ray has two other offspring that are working on their MACH titles, along with another daughter who competes in USBCHA and AKC herding. Ray also has eleven very promising grandchildren, and all of them are working in agility and/or herding.

Describe Raymond's two Championships:

Ray finished his conformation championship in just 12 shows, but that was spread over a two year time period from his first show (four point major at the age of ten months) to his last show just before his third birthday. He was one of the last ABCA registered dogs to finish a conformation championship that was able to keep his papers, as he finished in December of 2003 and the cutoff was January of 2004. Raymond has beautiful structure, and he was also a very showy and "pretty" dog; he held his own against the show-bred dogs. In fact, out of my seven conformation championships on paps and Border Collies, his was definitely the easiest.

Raymond and his housemate Riva were my first two Herding Champions, and since they are only a year and a half apart in age, it was like they were both my "first dog" when it came to herding. To further complicate matters, they were very different dogs, Ray was always push, push, push and Riva was a little more biddable, although she did not have near as much talent as Ray did. Riva actually earned her Herding Championship first (and in less trials) than Ray did. Ray won an 18 dog Advanced A sheep class the day he finished his HXAs, and then we had trouble finding another major when he was going after his HC. Ray developed pneumonia in the middle of his HC campaign, and that certainly slowed us down for a little while, but he finished his HC handily in 2007, making him my second Dual Champion. Rick finished his DC in 2009.

Tell us about Ray's obedience career:

I have never, ever had a dog like Ray in obedience. He is what most non-Border Collie people think of when they think of Border Collies: an over-the-top, flying spit, heeling two feet in front of you, insane animal. Ray's idea of heeling was to be turned sideways, while jumping up and down. Hey, I worked on it, I really did 😊, but I also thought he was just a hoot, and I don't think laughing at him all of the time helped. Boy, did I get a lot of humility showing Raymond! I've had six OTCH dogs, but Ray is the one that made people smile, heck, Ray is the one that made people laugh out loud.

I have never been a big fan of rally, it doesn't appeal to me much. People talk about how much "fun" rally is, but a lot of the time I see dogs doing rally that aren't having a whole lot of fun. And then there's Raymond. Ray thinks rally is just the coolest thing EVER. Please don't get the idea that he was any good at rally, as he wasn't. I used to bring the video home and my husband would watch it and say, "You can't do all of that and actually QUALIFY, can you???" Although Ray didn't have a barking problem in regular obedience, rally made him bark, and I mean BARK. This would be while he was jumping up and down, backwards. The one time he actually did flunk rally, the second obstacle was the jump, and Ray was barking and bouncing backwards, and he ran in to the bar and knocked it off the jump standard!

I was determined to get a UD on Raymond, absolutely determined. I worked with him almost every day for two years after his CDX to try and get him ready to show in utility. Our biggest stumbling block was the articles. I've always said that Raymond has a great nose, and what a shame that he has chosen to use it for evil and never for good. Ray was totally OBSESSED with the leather articles, just obsessed. It took much re-training of the articles for Ray to finally be able to leave that darn leather article alone. Eventually, articles became his best exercise. Ray earned his UD in just seven shows, which amazed me. I consider his UD to be one of my greatest accomplishments in dogs.

I also firmly believe that Ray's UD may well not have happened without my good friends and neighbors, Dick and Peggy Battig. After one disastrous fun match where Ray went out and scattered the articles all over the ring while pouncing on his beloved leather article, Dick decided to make teaching Ray how to do articles his personal quest. I couldn't get RID of the man, he only lives a mile away, and every day he would come over and make me do articles. And, finally, Ray got it. However, the summer before Ray got his UD, I was having so many other problems with Ray, not to mention Rick was showing so much promise, that I decided that maybe it was time to give it up and throw in the towel on Ray's UD and start spending all of that training time on Rick. I mentioned to a couple other good friends that I was seriously thinking about giving it up, and they made the appropriate noises that maybe that was a good thing to do. And then I told Peggy that I thought it was time to give up on Ray's UD. She said, "Well, I guess that would mean more time spent with Rick, and that would be good." and then I asked her if SHE would give it up, and she said NO. DARN that woman! So, back to work Ray and I went, and we never looked back until that wonderful day when Ray finished his UD, with Dick and Peggy in attendance.

What is Ray like to live with?

Ray is a hoot, both in and out of the ring. He can be very sweet, and he really loves people. He loves to reach up in the morning and put his paws on my chest and stretch while he says "good morning" (and he likes to do that and say "good afternoon" as well!). Ray has a very kissable spot right between his eyes and a day isn't complete until he is kissed. Raymond also has some obsessions, like most Border Collies do. He is totally obsessed with the gate that goes from the front deck to the yard. He loves to run out the door to the yard, then he spins around and crouches down, while guarding the deck gate.

I'm not sure what he is guarding the deck gate from, you'd have to ask him 😊 He carefully peeks around the gate to see what is happening, and if something does happen (in his mind, anyway), then he races around the tree at the other side of the yard and then resumes his position behind the gate. One annoying obsession Ray has is my van. If we are out walking at a show, he is like a horse going back to the barn, he can't wait to get back to the van, and then he barks at Rick while Rick gets in his crate. It only lasts for about ten seconds and it sounds awful, but I've tried to fix it and have given up, call me a bad dog trainer I guess. My husband wants to know if Cesar Milan could fix it, and I said sure, as long as he was here every day to reinforce it 😊 But like I tell my students, we all choose what we're willing to put up with and what we're willing to go to battle for. When people watch Ray in the ring they will sometimes comment "I can't IMAGINE living with a dog like that", but like most Border Collies Ray is only like "that" in the ring. At home he is the perfect house pet and a total couch potato. All of my dogs are mellow house pets, they just lay around until mom announces an activity and then they're raring to go. They don't bring me toys to throw, they don't pester me, they just lay around until I want to do something. When my friends or students describe how their dogs bug them all of the time, I go back to my "what you are willing to put up with" theory. Of course most people don't train dogs as much or as often as I do, so their dogs might not need as much rest as mine do!

What have you learned about dog training in general from your experience with Raymond?

I've learned that I can't have everything I want, no matter how much I want it. I've learned that a UD on one dog can be equal in accomplishment to an OTCH on another dog. I've learned that a dog's youth and soundness can be fleeting, and I must enjoy EVERY day of training and competing, as I never know when it may end. In the summer of 2006, Raymond just didn't seem "right". He was still working hard and doing well in obedience and herding, but I knew that something was wrong. My good friend Kathy Knox was at my place for a herding seminar in July, and I didn't work Ray the first day of the clinic as he was just a little off, and it was very hot. The next morning Kathy said, why don't you bring the sheep in and we can see how Ray is doing and decide whether to work him at all. Ray went out and brought the entire herd in, but Kathy agreed with me that he wasn't right. I made an appointment for him for the following Monday, but when we went in for lunch, he looked so bad that I rushed him in to a vet clinic in Omaha (my veterinarian husband was out of town, which he always seems to be during a crisis with the dogs!). I was very lucky that the dad of one of the gals who worked at the vet clinic was a human radiologist, and he looked at the x-rays of Raymond's lungs and said, "If this was a person, he'd be in a world of trouble." Long story short, Ray was rushed to the Iowa State Veterinary College that evening. He had a collapsed lung and pneumonia, and they told me on Sunday morning that he had a 50/50 chance of making it. He made it through the crisis, and a couple of days later my husband and I went to visit Ray in Ames. They brought him out with nasal oxygen and an iv, and Ray was trying to play tug with the cords! I knew then that he was going to make it! The vets at Iowa State told me they had never seen a dog that sick recover that quickly. We never did get a reason as to why Ray developed the pneumonia. I have to be careful with him in very hot

and very cold weather, but other than that, he made a complete recovery. I think he is like a cat with nine lives!

Any advice for our readers who may have a dog with a disability?

Find meaningful work for your dog, whether it be obedience, tracking, tricks, or therapy. Like they say, when one door closes, another door opens. Although I believe that we make our own luck, I also know that sometimes things happen for a reason. Lessons are sent for us to learn, whether we want to learn them or not. Do what you can to make your dog comfortable and happy, and enjoy him for what he brings to the party. Every morning I kiss the spot on Ray's nose and thank God that he was sent to me.