

# Love Does It All

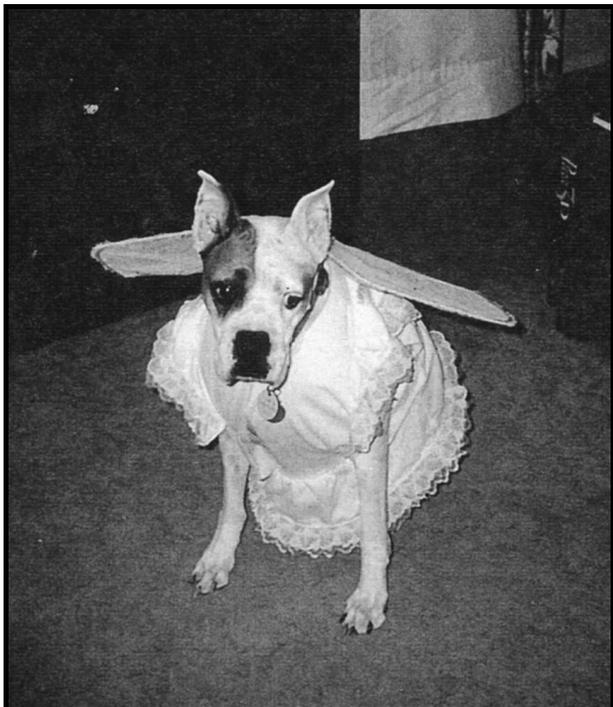
*Kathryn Robinson*

Katie Robinson has been with the Clowntown Alley 3 years and working with dogs and cats in therapeutic settings with P.A.L. (Pets Add Life) for 8 years. She is a retired US Air Force Medic and lives in Holiday, Florida.

We got into clowning almost by accident with a local group called P.A.L. Pets Add Life is a group of about 15 women and 20 dogs who go to nursing homes and schools every week to entertain. Our shows vary with the season: summer is usually a doggy wedding (Rocky is the preacher), followed by a circus (that's when I got into clowning), then our Christmas extravaganza, and Mr. & Miss American, etc. We are now doing a doggy Olympics.

I am not a dog trainer. I do know the commands because several of our P.A.L. ladies are trainers. We use simple stories and have the dogs dressed to the parts. It's pretty simple, but a lot of fun. Rocky plays Fairy Boxer in a fairy tale I wrote for P.A.L. (Pictured to the right) Rocky loves to show off and make me happy. We do a lot of silly tricks which really make the little kids happy

The costumes change, but usually the dog tricks are the same. Some dogs do obedience training or leave a goodie on their nose until given permission to move, jump through a hoop, etc.



*Fairy Dog*



*Rocky Jean and Rocky's Moma*

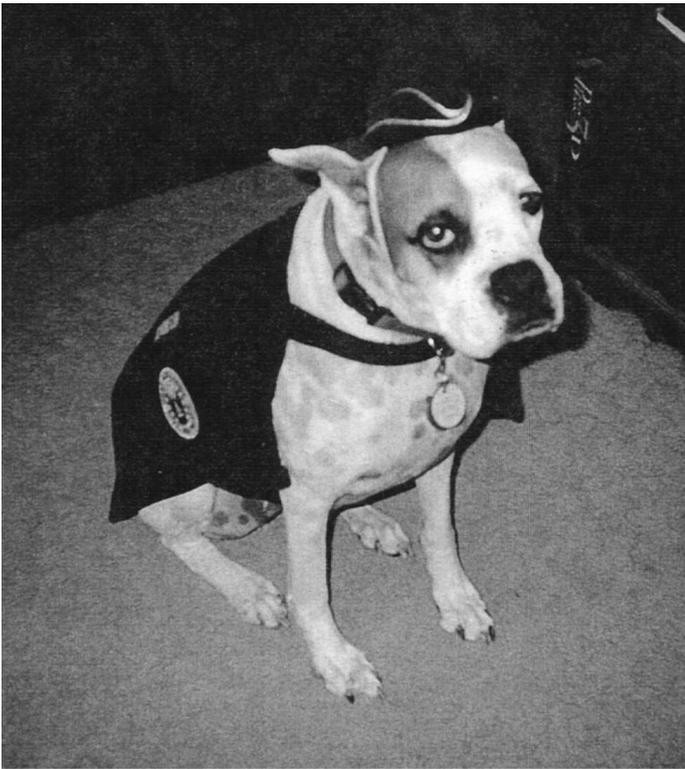
Rocky's big trick is her "Happy Dog" jump. I hold a goodie in my hand, over my head and say "Happy Dog" and she jumps to get the goodie. She can jump 2 -3 or more feet straight up.

Another routine we do: I put Rocky in "sit-stay" with her back to the audience. "Rocky you have your back to the audience! Turn around and look at the audience!" I try to turn her around, but she just sits there. Then when I'm about to give-up, I put a doggie goodie in my hand, so Rocky sees it, but the audience can't. Of course, when I walk around Rocky to the front, "That dog won't do a thing I tell her. I give up" Rocky follows behind me and faces the audience. (I pretend not to see her) Kids and nursing home residents love it."

Rocky also waves bye-bye and shakes hands. She usually shakes with her left paw and when I correct her and she does it right, the audience really laughs. We have one little dog that sits on a hobby horse. He wears a cowboy hat, etc. He just sits on his horse and rocks.

A little history on *Rocky Jean* will help you understand how we work. Love does it all. Rocky had been badly abused and then abandoned at approximately age three. When I adopted her from Animal Control, she weighed 48 pounds and was scared to death. She is a white Boxer with a brown patch around her right eye. I was afraid Rocky would be mean because of the way she'd been treated in her younger years. She had been trained with pain, not love. My veterinarian, Dr. Robert Hase, and I got her up to her proper Boxer weight of 65 pounds, and I taught her how to play. She's been a perfect angel ever since. Thank heavens she is very protective of me!

*Lt. Col. Rock Jean of the Civil Air Patrol*



The American Legion or VFG has asked us to come to their Children's Christmas or Safety Day programs and we can't say no to kids in need. After a show, we go around and let the adults in nursing homes and kids in schools pet the dogs. That's where Rocky shines. She will stand still as a statue as long as someone rubs her head or backside. The dogs seem to know when we are at a nursing home. They put on their good behavior. One little boy was terrified of dogs, but after he saw Rocky do her happy dog jump, he put his arms around Rocky and just hugged her. It was amazing.

Since I am an air force veteran, I use the medical facilities at the VA hospital. I saw a notice that they needed some entertainment in the nursing home unit. Rocky and I have been there several times, as clowns and just to walk through to visit. The residents seem to remember when "I had a dog at home" and Rocky brings them out of their shells.

Rocky is a registered Therapy Dog with Therapy Dogs International. She has a picture I.D. Card and wears a yellow tag on her collar. Those two items will get her into places that don't allow dogs. For certification details contact Therapy Dogs International at (201) 543-0888, 6 Hilltop Road, Mendham, NJ 07945.

Rocky is no longer among us, but somewhere she is making the angels laugh.

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### ***Man's Best Friend to the Rescue (Again!)***

According to Beth Franklin of the Delta Society<sup>11</sup>, "dogs see 10 times better than humans, hear 1,000 times better and have a sense of smell that is about 220 million times better than a human's." You may have seen on news lately that dogs are also being trained to detect certain types of cancer mainly melanoma cells (skin cancer) with uncanny accuracy.

Beth Franklin continues "Animals have many lessons to teach us. They model for us how to live a more centered life. Animals love unconditionally, forgive readily, listen attentively, find joy in life's simple pleasures and support us by simply being who they are. In my work with animal assisted activities and therapy, I notice that animals are very sensitive to human suffering. They innately know who in the room needs their visit and how long to stay." Beth Franklin works not only with dogs, but with cats, rabbits, birds, guinea pigs, hamsters and some farm animals. All registered as Delta Society Pet Partners. The animals and their pets go through a screening and training process.

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and Beth are developing a n animal assisted therapy program that includes a measured study by the Center for Nursing Research. They're designing the program so that the animals will go into the waiting areas of the cancer center. The animals will take the tension from the staff as well as ease the fear of the patients.<sup>10</sup>