

Smarter than Jack

The story behind the stories



Jeannie Campbell is the creator and passion behind this series of true stories of how common pets and animals aren't really that common, they can be very smart. Over the years this series of books have helped to raise well over \$150,000 for animal welfare groups around the world.

As Jeannie Campbell states "Until late 1999 my life was a seemingly endless search for the elusive 'fulfilment'. I had this feeling that I was put on this earth to make a difference, but I had no idea how. Coupled with this, I had low self-confidence - not a good combination! This all left me feeling rather frustrated, lonely and unhappy with life. I'd always had a creative streak and loved animals. In my early years I spent many hours designing things such as horse saddles, covers and cat and dog beds. I even did a stint as a professional pet photographer.

Then I remembered something I was once told: do something for the right reasons and good things will come. So that's what I did. I set about starting Avocado Press and creating the first New Zealand edition of the SMARTER than JACK series. All the profit was to go to the Royal New Zealand SPCA.

Good things did come. People were thrilled to be a part of the book and many were first-time writers. Readers were enthralled and many were delighted to receive the book as a gift from friends and family. The Royal New Zealand SPCA was over \$43,000 better off and I received many encouraging letters and emails from readers and contributors. What could be better than that?

How could I stop there! It was as if I had created a living thing with the SMARTER than JACK series; it seemed to have a life all of its own. I now had the responsibility of evolving it. It had to continue to benefit animals and people by providing entertainment, warmth and something that people could feel part of. What an awesome responsibility and opportunity, albeit a bit of a scary one!

It is my vision to make SMARTER than JACK synonymous with smart animals and a household name all over the world. The concept is already becoming well known as a unique and effective way for humane societies to raise money, to encourage additional donors and to instil a greater respect for animals. The series is now in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom."

We hope you enjoy the following extract that comes from 'Dogs are Smarter than Jack'. With Christmas fast approaching, these would make great gifts or stocking fillers for the pet people in your life. Remember too, that sales help raise money for those who've been abandoned or abused.



The 'Rescue' Dog Rescues Her Master

A lifetime ago, we left England behind and went to live on a smallholding in the remote Shetland Islands, about as far as it's possible to get from anywhere else without actually leaving the country and yet still be a world apart.

It was our home for the next 16 years, along with a menagerie of chickens, lambs, goats, pigs, rabbits, four cats and the eight whippets who made the journey with us. Of the dogs, five were three generations of the same family and one was a star in his own right, having had a brief role in a popular BBC comedy. The other two - Penny and her son Fred - were 'rescue' dogs. For a long time Fred remained shy and distant, yet from our first meeting Penny, so full of trust and love, was joyous at their release. That they had survived so much and were still together was, to me, nothing short of a miracle.

For those born there, and for those who can stay, Shetland is a strange land. As befits this far northern outpost of ancient Viking settlers, it is a place of both rugged beauty and wild extremes. Summer - with daylight 24 hours long, rolling heather hills and steel blue seas - contrasts starkly with long dark winter nights, where flickering northern lights are often one's only company. And then there's the wind... screaming gales that last for weeks on end, turn the grass black with salt spray and occasionally leave tractors upended in the fields or tankers strewn on rocks. I once slept soundly through a 148 miles per hour hurricane, only to find the following morning that the house next door had been completely demolished. In Shetland the wind has a mind of its own, and all too often a wild sense of humour to match.



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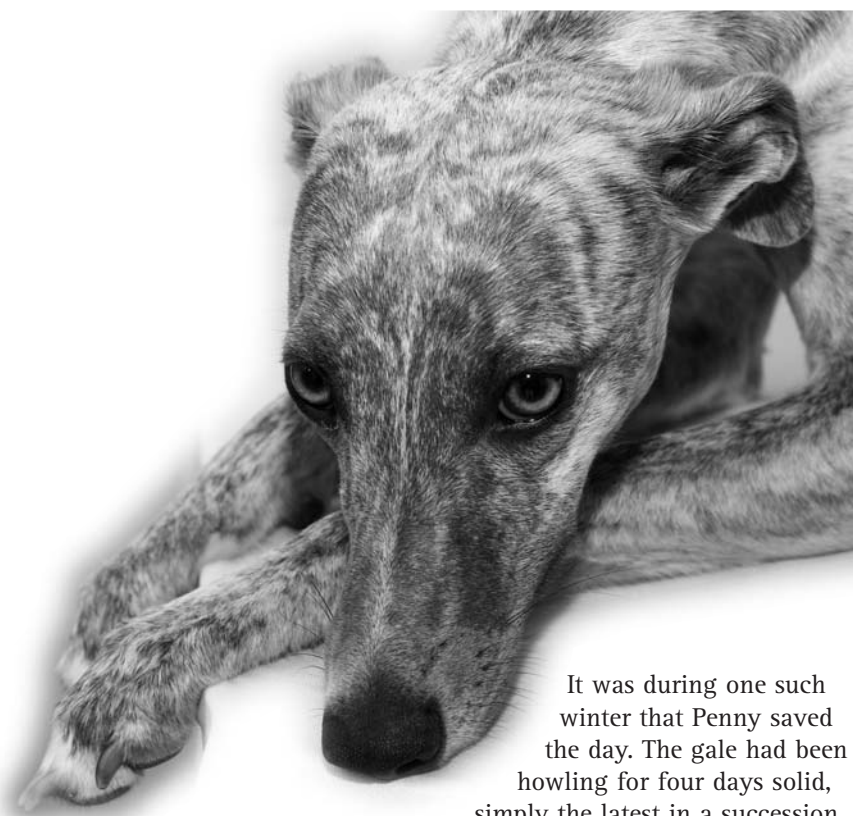
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It was during one such winter that Penny saved the day. The gale had been howling for four days solid, simply the latest in a succession

that swept the North Sea, a steady Force Nine that shook all the windows and, when it came, drove rain horizontally. I was out doing the rounds, wrapped in oilskins and zipped up against the wind, to collect eggs and feed the animals. As always, it was a battle simply to get around the corner of the house and out to each building.

In these conditions, opening doors – whether car or house – is always the trickiest part. The first year we arrived, the wind took the door off the Land Rover, simply because I wasn't quick enough. Depending on the direction, getting it shut could become the problem, and with a door or window wide open, any roof will start to creak ominously.

On this occasion, I managed to unbolt the door and squeeze in through the gap before fastening it on the inside. For the next 20 minutes or so, thankful for shelter, I tended to the animals and spent some time rearranging bales of hay and bags of feed in the storeroom, while around me the whole building flexed and strained. The wind was savaging everything outside and tearing around like a mad thing.

Finally, having made sure everything was secure, I prepared to do battle with the elements once more. I took a firm hold of the door and lifted the catch, ready to slip out between gusts. But the door wouldn't open. The wind, forever playing tricks, had spent the last 20 minutes shaking at the door. Held only loosely on the internal catch, slight play had allowed the outside bolt to work gently back into place, perhaps by only the smallest amount. But it was enough to trap me inside; I was a prisoner.

I spent the next ten minutes trying to rattle the bolt back, while grim humour gave way to disbelief. There were no other entrances save for a small sealed vent in the roof, and no hinged windows. The door, now fast because of the bolt outside, refused to budge. True, I might have broken through the door but, once it was gone, the wind would come raging in unchecked and probably lift off the entire roof. Although I was less than 20 yards from the house, no sound I could make would be heard above the noise of the gale. What was more, after doing the rounds I'd planned to go straight into the garage to start work on the car, so would probably not be missed for at least another couple of hours. As I pondered my predicament, the wind shrieked as though with delight, pummeling the walls and hammering on the door.

Some minutes later, through the corrugated perspex, I saw a quick movement in the garden outside. I realised at once what was happening, and knew it was my only chance. Inside the house, one of the dogs – probably old Zoe – had stirred from beside the fire. Some of the others would have pretended not to notice, while the rest slept on, oblivious. But they all knew the rule: once one needed to go out, the rest would be sent regardless. So they would have been roused, chivvied and cajoled – especially Gelly, who always pretended to be deaf, invisible or both, particularly when the weather was bad. They would be shepherded into the front porch, and the inner door would be closed behind them, like an airlock, before the outer door was opened to the elements.

At that point, eight shivering bundles of whippet, all crowding together until the last possible second, would fire out of the doorway as though from a cannon. They would fly in all directions around the house to find a sheltered spot, before skidding to a halt moments later back outside the door, piling in like jets onto a carrier deck. Safely back inside, once admitted beyond the sanctuary of the inner door, they would race to get first position on their bed of sheepskin rugs beside the fire, before finally settling back down.

The movement I had seen, out there among the hammering tussocks and the shrubs, was the first of those highly sprung projectiles ricocheting around the garden – probably Oxo, the fittest and fastest and always first past the post. Next came a white blob of head that could only be Tot, so named because she was only four ounces at birth, but born to follow her big sister regardless, even in the teeth of every gale.

I called out to them, rapping on the door and waving to get their attention. I knew that if I could get them to come over and bark, thinking I was playing, their noise



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would bring my wife to the window. The two of them dashed forward into the wind, giving one or two playful woofs, before retreating, keen to turn and run back indoors. I had to keep them at it. There were other shapes now, milling around, and although I couldn't discern them clearly, I knew their movements. Along came Skye, boisterous and bulldozing in, keen to see what all the fuss was about but anxious not to be outdone in the race back. Then came Pip headlong around the corner as she collided into the others, giving one quick yap before she'd had enough. Gelly was bouncing around like a jack-in-the-box. I had a brief glimpse of Zoe at the back; she shivered in the wind, not wanting to be outside. Next came Fred, who dashed up as sinuous as a weasel hopping around on the grass.

And then came Penny, reliably ambling up. Steady and steadfast, with her head down in the wind, she sailed along like some stately Victorian matron to see where I was and what all the fuss was about.

The moment they were all together, I knew there would be only one chance. If only I could get them started, the odds were that pack instinct would take over and make it self-sustaining. Frantically I started to coax, calling, cajoling and inciting them to bark wildly. And they did. For about 30 seconds it became one mad chorus of yapping pandemonium. Out there in the walled garden a pack of whippets pranced, barked and bounced around, dancing and dipping in the wild wind.

I peered through the perspex, desperate to see some sign of life within the house. Nothing.

Zoe was the first to disappear, followed closely by Pip and Gelly. Skye came back once, then, seeing that I was okay, remembered there was a race to the front door. Oxo and Tot scrapped a little longer, then, disappointed that I wasn't joining in, turned for home. Fred, always a slip of a lad, to his credit bounced over again to see what he could do, but the look on his face said quite plainly that he'd had more than he could take. He was thin-skinned and had no coat, and 50 knots of wind carried too keen a chill.

Only Penny remained, sitting patiently on the grass and looking at me. I spoke to her, explaining what had happened and what I needed her to do. She began barking again, her distinctive voice welling up deep and gravelly. I kept on encouraging her, and all the while she sat there, impervious to the howling gale fighting to drown out the sound. Only once did she begin to falter, but by then the desperation in my own voice must have spurred her on. She sat down again on the grass and barked endlessly, defying the wind with a bark that said she would not be moved until help arrived. A figure finally appeared behind her, coming from the house. And so my trap was sprung.

Back inside the warm comfort of the house with Pen and the others, I thanked her with real and heartfelt gratitude. I've always believed that animals really respond not just when you talk to them but when you treat them as individuals. Open and honest affection is the most genuine form of communication.

Of course Penny never made a fuss, but she knew what she'd done. Now, looking back on that day, a lifetime ago, I think that she may have felt that helping to release me from captivity was just her way of returning the favour.

Gary Wright
London, England

'A 'rescue' dog rescues her master' appears in 'Dogs are SMARTER than JACK!'

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