Asa and I have returned from our adventures in NY. We had a wonderful time despite not getting to do agility on tv. The people on the David Letterman show were wonderful to us and to the dogs. It appears that we may be re-invited for a second visit on Tuesday, but it is up in the air right now whether we will be invited and if invited, whether I’ll take a day off of work.

We spent most of Thursday, April 25th, from about 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. at the studio. Originally, we were supposed to be able to go back to the hotel from noon to 3, but things weren’t going smoothly with the rehearsal. The most interesting part of the work was the total uncertainty of what we were going to do and when we would do it. Plans were changed dozens of times, and we rehearsed several different activities during the day. Rumors spread like wildfire about what we were going to do and when. The scene of the two border collies Surf and Kaylee waving was quite impromptu. There was another scene that they might have shown with the two border collies and the sheltie Jag lying on the couch while Asa was lying on the back of the top of the couch, and they all appeared to be watching the show. They have some footage of it so it’s possible they might show it in the future.

When we arrived in the morning, they had blocked off 53rd street for one block starting from Broadway. In the center of the block, they had built a long though narrow agility course (100 feet by 30 feet ring, I believe). Usually they get the equipment from max200, but all of their stuff was out at shows. They got equipment from an alternative source, which included several layers of carpet on the street. When we first got there, the course was already built, and we walked the course and practiced a little. At one point, Asa decided the camera on the boom coming in from the sky was evil and needed to die. Fortunately, for the camera, it stayed out of her reach, and I tried to spend a little time desensitizing her.

Wendy Pape (several time national champion and had been on several shows previously) was wonderful. She suggested a couple of modifications to the course to make it a little safer for the dogs (e.g., changing a triple to a single in one location), and these were done. Then we started to get a little mist coming down, and the surface of the carpeting (it seemed like indoor/outdoor carpeting) got damp. When this carpet became damp, the border collies and a couple of the handlers started looking like we were on skates for the first time. Wendy and Christina were worried about the safety of their border collies. Although Asa
appeared to be fine on the slick surface, I suggested that we all stick together
in mentioning our concerns about safety. When we mentioned our concerns to
the David Letterman people, they were wonderful. There was absolutely no
pressure for us to do anything that we considered the least bit dangerous. They
didn’t want us to do anything that might jeopardize the dogs.

Initially, we tossed around the idea of doing a simpler course, but then
scratched outdoor agility. After scratching the outdoor agility, the 60 weave
pole challenge was set up. We practiced that a little, and I believe they showed
some footage of Surf and Kaylee practicing. However, we decided that even
doing weave poles was not a great idea.

The course was torn down, the carpeting rolled up, and everything was
stowed in the vehicles. They decided to do something in the studio. We had
all planned on going back to the really nice hotel (Sofitel) for a few hours, but
then it appeared that we would be rehearsing something in the studio during
the afternoon. So Wendy and I schlepped over to the hotel in the rain, grabbed
all of the stuff for all 4 people and dogs, crammed it into a taxi with a grumpy
driver and made it back to the show. This took quite a while on a rainy day in
Manhattan. They had decided to set up two sets of 18 poles in the two aisles
and a couple pieces of agility equipment on the stage. Two dogs would compete.
Both dogs would start on the stage, one would go up one aisle doing the weaves,
and the other would do the weaves in the other aisle, they would cross at the
back of the theater, then do the weaves in the opposite direction towards the
stage, go up the steps, and then do a jump tunnel. The fourth dog that they
had brought in was a little sheltie named Jag that was on the US world team.
We had to compete against Jag. Surprisingly, Asa won in the rehearsal. I teased
Erin about a tp beating a dog on the world team, and Erin jokingly claimed
that I cheated ‘cuz I took a short cut at the back of the theater. Hey, nobody
said the shortcut was against the rules.

As show time neared, we learned that the fire marshall said that the weave
poles couldn’t be in the aisles in case people needed to evacuate the studio so
that messed up the plans again. We heard a rumor that the course was being
rebuilt outside, which we couldn’t understand since we weren’t doing agility
outside. Then we heard a rumor that they simply wanted a picture of the
course with the rain for tv. However, the stage crew refused to rebuild the
course since the wet rolls of carpeting weighed a ton. During the taping of the
show, we were told to just sit tight and anything could happen.

I was feeling bad for several of the organizations involved: The David Letter-
man show, Alan Taylor Company, Carson International, and Ralston-Purina. I
believe this show was the beginning of the sweeps for the David Letterman show
so they were putting a lot of faith in our dogs. All four organizations treated
us wonderfully, and it looked like all four were going to get nothing out of all
the time, effort, and money that they put into this event. The Purina people,
the Alan Taylor people, and the Carson people were with us when the show was
beginning. When it looked like there work had been in vain, they seemed to
accept it as simply part of the game though it was clear that they were awfully
disappointed. You should have seen how their faces lit up when David said ["the"]
Purina Dog Chow Incredible Dog Challenge” and then when he said it a second time, they looked like kids on Christmas morning.

The short clip of the BC’s waving that aired April 25th, 2002 was an example of that though there were several other things that also could have happened including David might have just come down to visit or brought us up to the stage. I liked it when Paul Schaffer said something about a poodle being back there also. The show is quite spontaneous, and the staff has to remain flexible to do whatever David Letterman ends up doing. I ended up having a great time, learned a lot, enjoyed the people especially the agility people Christina, Erin, and Wendy.

After the show, a guy came in the room to grab his bag. After we talked for a few minutes, we learned that he was the drummer for the group Cee-Loe (sp?), which was on the show. We mentioned that we hadn’t seen him while we were watching on the monitor, and he started going on and on about how “they NEVER show the drummer.” He was hilarious. So when I saw later him sitting across the hall at the airport, I hollered something like “IT’S THE FAMOUS DRUMMER FROM CEE-LOE!!” I think he got a kick out of that.