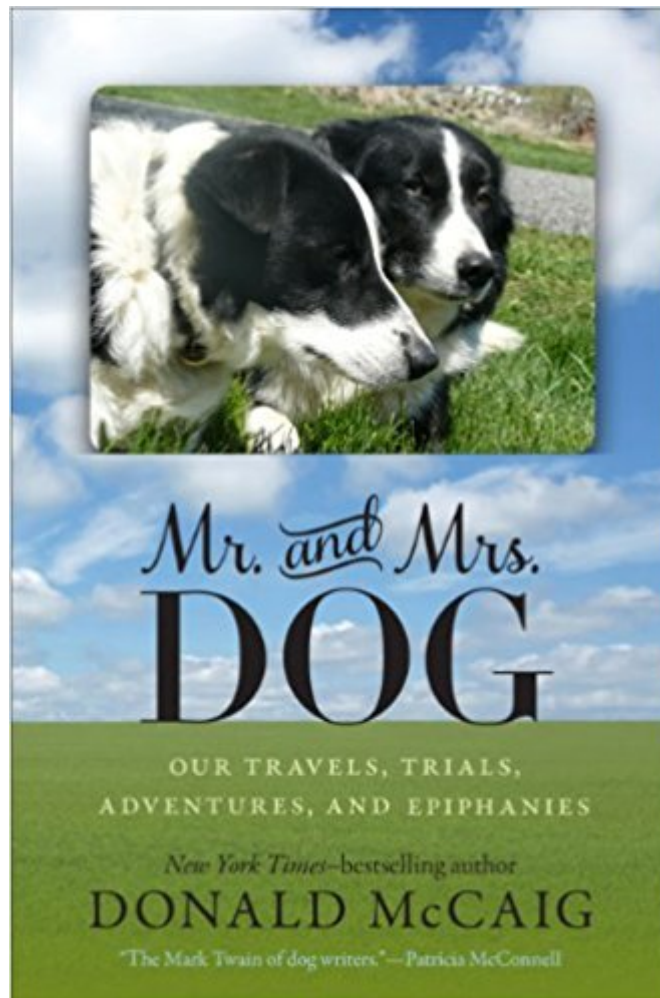




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Mr. And Mrs. Dog: Our Travels, Trials, Adventures, And Epiphanies



Synopsis

The New York Times's "bestselling author Donald McCaig has established an expansive literary career, founded equally on books about working sheepdogs and the Civil War novels Jacob's Ladder and Rhett Butler's People, the official sequel to *Gone with the Wind*. In his new book, *Mr. and Mrs. Dog*, McCaig draws on twenty-five years of experience raising sheepdogs to vividly describe his and his dogs June and Luke's unlikely progress toward and participation in the World Sheepdog Trials in Wales. McCaig engagingly chronicles the often grueling experience through rain, snow, ice storms, and brain-numbing heat of preparing and trialing Mrs. Dog, June, "a foxy lady in a slinky black-and-white peignoir," and Mr. Dog, Luke, "a plain worker—no flash to him." Along the way, he relays sage advice from his decades spent talking with America's most renowned dog experts, from police-dog trainers to positive-training gurus. As readers of McCaig's novels will expect, *Mr. and Mrs. Dog* delivers far more than straightforward dog-training tips. Revealing an abiding love and respect for his dogs, McCaig unveils the life experiences that set him on the long road to the Welsh trial fields. Starting with memories of his first dog, Rascal, and their Montana roadtrip in a '48 Dodge, McCaig leads us into his thirties, when he abandons his New York advertising career to move to a run-down Appalachian sheep farm in the least populous county in Virginia. This 1960s agrarian adventure ultimately brings McCaig, Luke, and June to the Olympics of sheepdog trials. In his narration of one man's love for his dogs, McCaig offers a powerful portrayal of the connection between humans and their animal companions.

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Customer Reviews

Donald McCaig is quite simply a great writer in this field, and his insight into animal and human nature is masterly. (James Herriot) Donald McCaig is the Mark Twain of dog writers. (Patricia B. McConnell, author of *The Other End of the Leash* and *For the Love of a Dog*) Funny, instructive, and delightful to read! A combination of eloquent, touching, telling, and sometimes quirky observations. I read the book in a single day, unable to stop except when my dog needed to go for a walk. (Carol Lea Benjamin, author of *Do Border Collies Dream of Sheep?* and *Mother Knows Best*) McCaig talks about his dogs in an amusing and affectionate way. While the author mentions that Luke is not the best sheepdog, his other attributes, such as being a good companion, make up for his lack of skills. The author provides plenty of information about dog habits and breeds, sheepdog competitions and coaching for them, as well as tidbits regarding the joys of having a dog (or multiple).

(Kirkus) McCaig's wry, down-to-earth tone expresses a kind of clear-eyed devotion. While he loves his dogs, readers will not find any cloying or precious sentiments here, but rather an interesting primer on dog training and sheepdog trials studded with shrewd philosophical insights into humankind's relationship with our oldest friend. An informative and thought-provoking memoir about a trainer and his two border collies making their way to the world's championship for sheepdogs. (Shelf Awareness) Happily, *Mr. and Mrs. Dog* is an exception to the "heartbreak rule" about animal books.... By my count, this former advertising executive-turned-farmer has managed to bring out at least fifteen books while somehow keeping sheep in western Virginia, training dogs, and competing in far-flung sheepdog competitions.... Still, there's more to *Mr. and Mrs. Dog* than just a series of qualifying competitions in the United States, followed by our human-canine trio's adventures in Wales. Throughout, McCaig intersperses chapters on dog-training and on current, and competing, theories about how this should be done. (Washington Post)

Donald McCaig, a New York Times "bestselling novelist, poet, and essayist, is the author of *Nop's Trials*, *Nop's Hope*, *The Dog Wars*, *A Useful Dog* (Virginia), *Eminent Dogs*, *Dangerous Men*, *Last Poems*, and *An American Homeplace* (Virginia). A sheepdog trainer, he lives with his wife, Anne, and their nine dogs on a farm in the western mountains of Virginia.

I'm not sure anyone who doesn't have or know a Border Collie, would really like this book as much as those of us who do have Border Collies. Donald McCaig is a familiar name to followers of sheepdog trialing in the U.S., both for his many books about dogs and training, and for his presence as a handler at many trials. He mentions people who are well-known trainers and

handlers whose work I have seen at the National Sheepdog Finals when they have been held near Klamath Falls, Oregon. It is an amazing demonstration of inter-species cooperation and understanding. This book chronicles his attempt to qualify one or both of his two dogs, Luke and June, for a place on the American team which will compete in Wales at the World Sheepdog Trial. Along the way he tells the history of the many types of training available to owners of pet dogs today, while revealing only a little of his own bias toward any of them. Some of the ideas, like clicker training, positive reinforcement only training, and electronic collar training are pretty well-known, but he expands on their histories and philosophies. McCaig calls on the promoters of these and other training methods to see for himself why they work or if they work. That was all interesting, but not as much fun as his stories about his own experiences with his own dogs. The next time I go to a local or national sheepdog trial I will have a better appreciation of how it feels to do this very complex work with dogs, and, of course, sheep. I loved this book.

Very enjoyable reading. As a stockdog person, I identified with Donald McCaig's book, and felt that it was as delightfully written as any he has produced. It made me laugh, cry, and THINK deeply about the loves of my life - my sheepdogs. But it is not just for sheepdog people at all - it is an exploration of the connection and the communication between man and dog that takes the reader to many different places and explores/observes the many different ideas and methods that we humans have devised to train our dogs. For anyone who sincerely loves and values the relationships we have with our dogs, this is a great book. When I had finished this book, I wanted to flip it over, go back to the first page, and begin reading it all over again.

The story of McCaig's quest for a world title was interesting and provided some insight into the world of herding competition. The story is probably more interesting because McCaig and his dogs are very good but not world beaters. They have to struggle and pick up some lucky breaks in order to have a shot at the dream. The author intermixes some interesting tidbits about training dogs. With all of that the narrative moves along at a nice pace.

McCaig does it again. He had given us a book full of information and insights. Lots of hard info comparing different training methods and philosophies, and lots of McCaig personality thrown in. I feel as though I know him AND his two wonderful dogs. Having been to watch sheepdog trials, it is very satisfying to have the back story filled in for me.

Very entertaining. It is very different to read a story with real backgrounds and people that you actually know. Or even people that are on your dogs pedigree lines. I enjoyed the book very much. Although after having just lost my 16 yr old BC, my heart broke afresh with the McCaig's loss of their old dog. I felt much the same emotions. Thank you for your book.

I have been a Donald McCaig fan for years and this book certainly lives up to my expectations. Rather than an ongoing story format, this is a series of essays and thoughts. As written by McCaig's hand it is entertaining and teaches about sheep dog trials.

Once again, Donald McCaig has written a wonderful book about the subject he knows best -- and obviously loves: DOGS! Thank you for another beautiful book!

This is obviously about dogs. It is a tearjerker, but saying that sells it short. This is a good book with a different slant on the relationship between dogs themselves and the people who influence their lives

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