

Maci McGraw, Tonapah, AZ

I'm privileged and excited to have taken this herding journey with my mom. In 2010, my dad and mom, Jim and Peggy McGraw, drove to San Diego, California with two 12 week old puppies to talk with a herding trainer ... and there began the journey that would lead mom and I to the USBCHA finals 8 years later.

In 2013, we hosted our first USBCHA clinics and field trial. As dad would say, if something was worth doing, give it everything. So in 2014, the family bought a farm just outside of Phoenix. Dad spent the spring and summer clearing fields, building a future for the herding family of Far Out Fetching Flockers (FOFFs). Mom and Dad moved into the house in September, but a few weeks later, Dad passed, leaving the legacy for Mom and I. Two weeks after losing dad, mom lost her primary herding dog.

But mom persevered and few months later I found her a special dog, Drover, who this fall will take mom at age 70+ to Open. Along this journey we made some amazing friends, and built a place to support and encourage new handlers to the sport. The USBCHA handlers are a big family, just like those we grew up rodeoing and ranching with.

At finals this year mom is handling Morgane. We imported Morgane as an 8 week old puppy from James McGee of Ireland. She's a daughter of Sid and granddaughter of Becca. Morgane will try anything for mom and together they are becoming a great team. I am walking to the post with Jules, registered name GiGi. She was imported as a pup from Angie Driscoll of Kinloch Sheepdogs in Wales. My journey with Jules has been challenging and taught me a great deal about training, trialing, patience and perseverance. But I wouldn't give up a moment of this wonderful experience.

Each day the key is to remember that we do this for love of the stock, the dogs and the experience we garner together.