



## Margaret and Gert

*by Sarah Marino*

*illustrated by Dion Williams*

### *Margaret's Diary*

**Day 106.** Dad keeps telling me it's not going to work, that I might hurt Gert if we continue, but I know she can do it. Yesterday, she didn't stop in the middle; she finished the entire course! Well, she wouldn't do the last jump, but she was just afraid because it had begun to rain. I know she can do it. Her legs are strong enough, and now that she's lost weight, I know it's possible. Sometimes Dad makes me so angry I just run to the barn and cry to Gert. She looks at me like she knows, and she nuzzles her head against my cheek.

**Day 117.** Today was a great day. We did it. In front of the reporters, Mom and Dad, Leslie, Nigella, Jonathan, and Alan. In front of Mr. And Mrs. Towson and the

girls, and Grandma and Pap. Gert finished the course! And she made both jumps!

She was trembling a little in the beginning, and I was worried that she was going to freeze. She had never run the course with so many people around. I scolded myself for not practicing in front of a crowd, but then I realized it was no time for scolding. I told her to ignore the crowd. I told her it was fine (I was telling myself, too). I told her she could do it and that I loved her no matter what. I could feel her relax as we headed to the first jump. Her legs felt sturdier. She gained a little speed and took the jump with grace, but her legs grazed the crates. She got nervous again, but I kept telling her to settle, and she kept going.

She went through the sand and the grass, slowly but steadily. I could feel the strength in her. It was like she could really hear me and was listening. I knew we would be okay. She kind of raised and lowered her head a few times—her way of telling me she was ready and feeling fine. I just kept saying how great she was doing, coaxing in a tough but gentle way, like Mr. Towson showed me he does with his horses.

Next we went through the cones and she seemed to sway a bit. I was worried that I might slide off of her. She seemed nervous again, and she hesitated after the fourth cone. I kept encouraging, sternly pushing her to keep going. Then she really did stop. It was only for a few seconds, but it felt like hours. My stomach turned over and over. I took a deep breath and kept pushing her. She picked up again and we were through the cones, finally!

Then I started urging her a little more sternly, to get her to go faster for the final jump. She seemed shaky, and I was afraid the cones had made her too dizzy. She listened, though, and we moved several feet.

As we got closer to the final jump, she seemed stronger. It was like a blur. I didn't even realize what had happened until she had done it. We were on the other side and I could hear screams and laughter. I screamed, "Yee-haw," which I've *never* done! I was so happy. I leaned forward and threw my arms around her and squeezed tight. Mom and Dad and Leslie and my friends came and were shouting and laughing, and they helped me down. Dad gave Gert an apple and me some water. Dad said he was proud of me and very impressed.

We had a huge meal after, and now, getting ready for sleep, I feel so tired, but I'm not sure I'll be able to sleep. It was a great day. I hope I never forget it. I hope I can accomplish other things like this in the future, even when people tell me such things aren't possible. I believe in myself.

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**Think you know cows? Better think again.**

By C. J. Hearst  
Associated Press

Well, perhaps pigs might be able to fly after all. Regarding our animal friends, the unthinkable may now be thinkable, given what happened yesterday on the farm of Daniel and Marie Framingham. The couple's daughter, Margaret, 15, successfully directed the family's five-year-old cow through an obstacle course fit for an athletic horse.

Margaret has been designing the course since she was 12 years old. It is quite impressive and unique. Complete with cones in zigzag formation, very tall grass, a stream (albeit quite narrow), sand, and two jumps, it is a course that has proven challenging, while also garnering some attention. A nearby stable owner has used the course several times for a few of his horses, to provide them with exercise and help alleviate boredom.

The teen said she began training Gert, the cow, over two years ago. "I've actually been training her since she was a calf, I suppose, but last summer I wanted to get serious. I knew she was ready."

Mr. Framingham said he knew the cow was different, stronger and more cunning, because it ran away repeatedly as a calf. "She must have knocked down five different kinds of fences—two-rail, three-rail, even a crossbuck fence—but she never went too far. She was feisty but loyal, I suppose. And she took to Margaret from the start."

Still, both parents had their doubts. Although her father was not thrilled with the idea, he also admired his daughter's wit and perseverance.

This reporter was on the scene to watch Gert make her way through the course. She was a bit shaky at first, perhaps because of the gaggle of observers standing around. However, she quickly settled under Margaret's guidance and made her way across the first jump, which consisted of a few old milk crates. Her back legs scraped a bit, but her handler congratulated her and kept her moving successfully.

With much encouragement and prodding, Gert made her way through the grass and sand at a slow but

steady pace. The cow almost seemed to nod at times, as if communicating directly with her handler.

There was a bit of a struggle through the zigzag cones as the cow appeared to lose momentum and actually stopped for a moment. Margaret coaxed her through to the final obstacle, the second jump. The

teen's face betrayed a slight shadow of fear, but the cow glided easily over the two-rail fence, even though this jump was more difficult than the first.

Cheering friends, family, and onlookers soon surrounded the team. "Yeehaw!" Margaret shouted. Yeehaw, indeed.