Which of the following quotes from the movie Best In Show pushed NBC Vice President of Sports Programming Jon Miller (nearly 22 years ago) into suggesting that his network put a dog show on television on Thanksgiving Day, replacing It’s a Wonderful Life?

• “I used to be able to name every nut that there was. Pine nut, which is a nut, but it’s also the name of a town. Pistachio nut. Red pistachio nut. All-natural white pistachio nut,”
  –Harland Pepper (Christopher Guest).
• “We are so lucky to have been raised amongst catalogs,”
  –Meg Swan (Parker Posey).
• “Don’t water the plants, they’re plastic,”
  –Gerry Fleck (Eugene Levy).
• “He went for her like she’s made outa ham,”
  –Buck Laughlin (Fred Willard).
• (musical): “God Loves A Terrier!”
  –Gerry (Eugene Levy) & Cookie Fleck (Catherine O’Hara)

“All of them,” Miller says, laughing. “My wife, Jan, rented the DVD for us one winter night in 2002 and we laughed so much that we had to watch it a second time.”

The next day at work, Miller went to his boss and made his suggestion. He was “tossed out of the office,” he remembers. He kept working on it, and eventually got to Jeff Zucker, head of NBC Entertainment at the time, who liked the idea, especially given that It’s a Wonderful Life was not drawing big numbers, and that NBC no longer had NFL football on Thanksgiving.

Boom, off to the races. Miller called Purina and got a sponsorship “yes” right away. Then he called Wayne Ferguson, Board Member and TV coordinator for the Kennel Club of Philadelphia, which had been staging dog shows for over 100 years. Ferguson made some suggestions as to what the dog show world would like to see, and they shook hands.
Miller went after some television talent to host. His first call was to Seinfeld alum and “America’s 7th most interesting man,” John O’Hurley. Here’s the conversation:

O’Hurley: “Hello.”
Miller: “Woof, woof.”
O’Hurley jumped on board.

Next up: Yours truly, longtime USA Network host of the Westminster Kennel Club. With the blessing of Westminster, the American Kennel Club, and Ferguson and KCP, it was a no-brainer for me. After a couple of years working around her Olympics schedule, Mary Carillo joined the team to be the backstage feature reporter.

Miller got Paul and Kathy Carson of Carson International, longtime producers of “The Incredible Dog Challenge” on NBC to agree to stage the event. He signed Steve Griffith of Vizion PR, one of the best sports and entertainment PR people on the planet, in my humble opinion.
New York Magazine once called David Frei “probably the most famous human in the world of canines.” He has been the co-host of NBC’s National Dog Show Presented by Purina since its inception in 2002, a role that he perfected in 27 years as the longtime (1990-2016) co-host of USA Network’s Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. David was director of communications for Westminster from 2003 to 2015, and in 2018, he was named to the Dog Writers Association of America’s Hall of Fame. He has been a breeder-owner-handler and judge in the world of purebred dogs for more than 40 years with his Afghan Hounds, Brittanys, and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. But David’s true passion comes from the work that his dogs have been doing over the past 30 years as Therapy Dogs in Seattle and in New York City at places including the Ronald McDonald House, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and at the VA Medical Center. He is an author and the founder of a much-recognized charity, Angel On A Leash, which creates and advocates for Therapy Dog programs nationwide.

David Frei and his Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Therapy Dog, True Dat.