



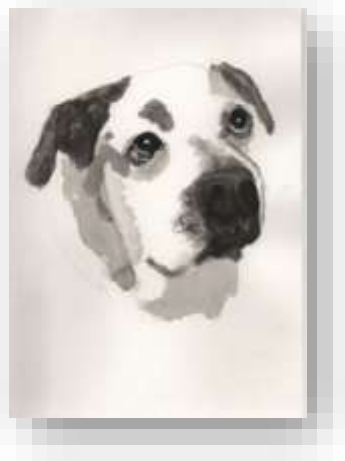
Dog Tales

A little wisdom we can learn from true stories about dogs

Book and Watercolor dog art by Al Jensen

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"If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."
—Will Rogers



This book is lovingly dedicated to all the good dogs that have graced our lives, teaching us invaluable lessons with their wagging tails and soulful eyes. From loyalty to joy, and from patience to the sheer art of stealing socks, these furry companions have been our greatest teachers.

Special thanks go to my wife, Annie, and my daughter, Melissa, whose ambitious undertaking to rewrite my professional resume took an unexpected turn. Not content with listing my usual accolades—master rock hauler, banjo player for the Foggy Minded Mountain Boys, and waterfall builder extraordinaire—they saw fit to bestow upon me the illustrious title of “master of dog visiting.”



Frankly, I'm still trying to figure out exactly what that means, but one thing's for sure: when you're honored with such a title, you'd better have a book to back it up. So, here it is—a collection of tails and tales dedicated to the wonderful world of dogs and the humans lucky enough to know them.

A Little Dog Magic

"Love is a language that the blind can see and the deaf can hear." Sally Fryland

It was a chilly Monday night in the winter of 2001, and inside the church, an ambitious team of workers was unloading a busload of individuals—a lively group of severely mentally handicapped people, each one a spark of life ready for some fun. Positioned in front of the piano, they waited eagerly for the evening's program of singing and magic. I was asked to entertain for an hour, blissfully unaware that I'd soon discover my secret weapon—Freckles, my ever-charming dog.



As I scanned the audience, I noticed a colorful tapestry of humanity: some swayed back and forth, others pointed enthusiastically, and many stared off into space as if contemplating the universe. The sounds were a delightful cacophony of grunts, laughter, and spontaneous gesticulations that might have made for a great abstract painting.

I kicked off the program with a spirited rendition of "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands." The crowd's response? A stunning silence that could only be

matched by a library in the middle of a power outage. Not one clap, not a single happy face. Determined to win them over, I pulled out my best magic trick—only to be met with the same crickets chirping. It was clear; I needed to bring out the big guns.



With a quick whistle that echoed like a doggy siren, Freckles burst onto the scene, donning his brown cloth deer antlers—a fashion statement that said, “I’m here to steal the show!” As he pranced around the audience, the atmosphere shifted dramatically. Suddenly, the crowd erupted! “Look! A dog!” they shouted, reaching out to pet him like he was the celebrity of the evening.

Next, Freckles performed his usual array of tricks: jumping through a hoop, sitting pretty, shaking hands, playing dead, and even dancing on his hind legs like he was auditioning for “Dancing with the Stars.” The excitement in the room skyrocketed when Larry, one of the attendees, approached Freckles after witnessing my doggy handshake. Eager to join in, Larry extended his hand, and I quickly placed a piece of cheese in it as a reward for Freckles.

In a garbled tone that sounded vaguely like “shake,” Larry made his command, and Freckles, ever the attentive pup, instantly offered his paw as if to say, “This is my

jam!" Larry's face lit up with joy as he realized he could actually command a dog—talk about a confidence boost!

As word spread like wildfire, others began issuing their commands, and Freckles became a canine superstar. He entertained the crowd, his thick furry coat becoming a preferred petting surface while his wet nose and tongue were in full-speed mode, offering **free kisses and slobbery affection**. His tail wagged with a gusto that could only be described as pure doggy delight.

Freckles thrived on the attention; he loved every loud gesture and excited laugh. "The more, the merrier!" was his motto. No judgments, no preconceived notions—just pure joy and acceptance. To him, this room was filled with God's choicest children, and he was honored to be their guest of honor.



As the evening progressed, Freckles continued his delightful routine of tricks, barks, and charming antics. The crowd cheered, laughed, and basked in the glow of one of God's greatest creatures—the dog.

And there it was again: another stellar performance by the star of the night, Freckles, and his trusty sidekick, Al. As is

often the case, I had prepared to dazzle the audience with my songs and tricks, only to be upstaged by my four-legged friend who effortlessly claimed the spotlight. And that, dear reader, is the magic of this book—the miracles, wisdom, and transformative power of our beloved dogs.

And Then, God Made the Dog



"God's loving hand daily manifests itself through our pets—who are our angels, friends, teachers, and healers."
—Jack Canfield

In the grand tapestry of creation, there came a moment when God decided to whip up something truly special. Enter the dog—God's little miracle with fur!

It must have a perfect temperament," He mused, "capable of connecting with anyone—even that grumpy neighbor down the street!" The design specifications were clear: it had to be resilient enough to handle the occasional mishap (like being dressed in silly costumes for Instagram) and still radiate a zest for life that would put even the most energetic toddler to shame.



This new creation needed to embody joy and love, serving as a devoted companion through thick and thin. God realized it had to grasp the concept of the pack, because let's face it—! Loyalty, fearlessness, and an uncanny knack for sensing human emotions were non-negotiable traits. And above all, it had to possess that magical ability to reach into our souls and fill them with unconditional love and warmth.

And so, God made the dog. In that moment, He knew He had given humanity a precious gift to help us navigate the ups and downs of life.

Sometimes, I think God must have chuckled to Himself, knowing that dogs would be the antidote to our human drama. With life's complexities weighing us down, dogs are here to remind us of the simple joys—like chasing their tails or rolling in something that smells questionable yet delightful.

It's remarkable how many times I've heard people share stories about their dogs and the profound impact these furry companions have had on their lives. Dogs possess an incredible talent for smoothing over life's hurts, infusing joy into our otherwise monotonous days, and providing the perfect excuse to step outside for some playtime. Whether it's fetching a ball or just rolling around in the grass, they

remind us that life is meant to be enjoyed—preferably with a wagging tail and a slobbery kiss!

Life Lessons from Our Canine Companions

“The power lies in the wisdom and understanding of one’s role in the Great Mystery and in honoring every living thing as a teacher.”

—Jamie Sands and David Carson

Imagine for a moment if your dog could talk. What advice would they give? Maybe something like, “Stop worrying about that promotion or that useless business meeting, and just throw the ball already!” Unfortunately, dogs have a bit of trouble mastering English, and let’s face it—most of us struggle with their unique barking dialect. So, how do they impart their wisdom? Through actions, of course!

Have you taken the time to observe a dog lately? It’s a spectacle worth witnessing. These furry beings practice traits and behaviors that are surprisingly advanced, especially when it comes to navigating the complex social landscape of both their fellow canines and us humans.

While human relationships often hinge on social class, job titles, or shared hobbies (let’s be honest, no one has ever made friends over a heated debate about tax

deductions), a dog's approach is refreshingly simple. With a dog, there are no hierarchies or hidden agendas. You don't have to worry about being insignificant, feeling pressured, or worrying about your fashion choices—or lack thereof. A dog doesn't care if you're wearing pajamas at noon or if your hair hasn't seen a brush in days. Their friendships are as pure as a sunbeam on a cozy floor. Dogs have an uncanny ability to see beyond superficial things like location, clothing, intelligence, income, health, or beauty. They leap into friendships with all four paws, disregarding human-made social norms and protocols like they're just silly hurdles in a game of fetch. In their eyes, every human is a potential best friend, just waiting to be discovered!

This book aims to share various bits of dog wisdom and the invaluable lessons I've learned from my own furry companion, along with delightful dog stories shared by others. So, buckle up! We're about to embark on a journey through the canine world, where every bark, wag, and slobber teaches us a little something about love, loyalty, and living life to the fullest.

Lesson #1: Use the "Puppy Eyes" If You Really Want Something

"There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face."

—Bern Williams

"Whoever said you can't buy happiness forgot about puppies."

—Gene Hill

It was a stunning spring day in Genola, Utah, when the phone rang. My daughter, Melissa, age four, and my son, Brian, age six, were practically glued to the receiver as they listened to Uncle Richard. His Border Collie mix, Cloud, had just had a new litter of puppies, and guess what? We were eligible for one!

Now, my wife was convinced that adding a dog to our already bustling family was not the best idea. But once the kids heard the magic word "puppies," it was game over.

The debate was settled, and the decision was made faster than a dog can chase its tail.



We hopped into the car, excitement buzzing in the air like a swarm of bees. As we drove toward Uncle Richard's home, you could hear the chorus of whining puppies in the garage, eagerly awaiting their evening meal. My daughter and son dashed ahead, eyes wide and hearts racing, as they spotted the adorable litter of baby Border Collies.

Melissa instinctively reached for one puppy. "Look! It has Freckles!" she exclaimed, pointing at the little guy's black spots on his snout. He was the runt of the litter—the smallest one, often overshadowed by his six boisterous brothers and sisters.

Melissa, with the enthusiasm only a four-year-old can muster, suggested the name "Freckles," and it felt like the universe was nodding in approval.

Melissa handed Freckles to me and looked up with those innocents, pleading eyes. You know, if only we could keep the kids from naming the dog, saying "No" would be a whole lot easier. But who could resist that tiny, furry face?



Of course, Uncle Richard was more than happy to let him go. Being a farmer, he always had a barn full of baby animals—dogs, cats, rabbits, and even cows. Giving away a puppy was a pleasure for him, not to mention a necessity!

As Freckles looked into Annie's and my eyes, he unleashed the ultimate weapon: those killer puppy eyes—the kiss of death! You know the look I'm talking about: the one that melts your heart and makes you weak in the knees. It was all over.



Before we knew it, Freckles was nestled in a box, wrapped in a cozy blanket, sandwiched between two of the happiest kids on the planet, as we drove back to our home in Salt Lake City, Utah. Thus began the life of Freckles, the best dog that ever lived. Little did I know that for the next sixteen years, my pal Freckles would introduce me to countless friends, spread joy like confetti, and create some of the most cherished memories of my

life.

So, be careful with those puppy eyes—they're downright dangerous! They can lead you into all sorts of trouble, whether it's a dog wanting to sneak a treat, a teenager pleading for car keys, a wife encouraging you to join her on a shopping

spree, or a daughter sweetly wrapping her arm around you while stealthily fishing for some cash from your pocket!



Lesson #2: Let Your True Self Come Out Once in a While

"If dogs' prayers were answered, bones would rain from the sky."
—Old Proverb

Peppy the Poodle taught me one day that what you see is not necessarily what you will get. You see, Peppy lived two lives: one as a prim and proper white registered Poodle with brushed-out pom-poms on his feet and tail, and the other as a vicious rat dog. Fortunately, Peppy's owner only knew him as the ultimate in poodle beauty and poise. Peppy was our neighbor's purebred AKC poodle. He would strut over very proud and confident, groomed with his pom-poms, red ribbons, puffy legs, and

trimmed head and face. He often smelled like his owner's pricy essence of lilac perfume.



One day, Peppy and his owner came over to visit. As I sat on the back lawn watching the river run by, I noticed a large rat climb from the water to a nearby garbage can. Peppy's ears perked up as he noticed it, too. What dog can resist a rat race?

Peppy's owner, wearing a beautiful lavender wardrobe, was stroking the perfectly groomed pom-pom on Peppy's head when the dog jolted from her lap toward the garbage can. In a flash, Peppy was in mad pursuit of the rat. The rat, noticing Peppy, instantly headed back toward the creek. Suddenly, Peppy jumped in the water after it, sloshing through mud and sticks and sliding down a slimy embankment. His beautiful silver and white coat became a green and brown, matted mess. The

perfume smell transformed from sweet lilac to week-old garbage. For the next several minutes, all you could see was glimpses of rat and



In one great lunge, Peppy caught the rat in his mouth, thrashing it back and forth. The poodle's owner, in sheer terror, ran toward him, trying to extract the rat and get her dog back. To her surprise, the rat escaped the jaws of death and sprang back into the garbage can. Again, Peppy followed in mad pursuit. You could hear the dog and rat banging against the sides of the garbage can as the owner frantically tried to end this battle. Finally, the chaos stopped, and Peppy jumped out of the can, his once white coat now a slimy mess with rat blood, spaghetti sauce, and leftovers of oatmeal and scrambled eggs embedded in his fur. Peppy, now with the rat in his mouth, trotted toward his owner. I couldn't tell who looked worse—the rat, the owner, or the dog. Judging by sheer expression, the owner had it the worst. Peppy stopped before her



and carefully released the rat at her feet, as if he'd retrieved a ball. But his owner didn't want to play. In fact, she looked ready to pass out.

This event was pure entertainment for me, but Peppy's owner was less than thrilled by her sweet pom-pom dog's dual personality. Peppy felt the need to let his true "rat poodle" character come out.

How many of us are like Peppy, just waiting to show our true selves? Sometimes you must throw off the perfume and pom-poms and become who you really are. You may surprise yourself with abilities far beyond others' expectations. And who knows you may win over someone who is a human rat.

Lesson #3: Never Give Up Hope; There Is Always Someone Who Needs a Friend

"Happiness is a warm puppy."

—Charles Schultz

Janice tells her story about her dear friend, Moe.

I had just received a new teaching job at a remote Navajo Indian reservation in Arizona. The town, called Toyal, was in the middle of nowhere. As I climbed out of my car and surveyed the landscape, I suddenly felt the vastness and loneliness of the area. I was many miles away from home, only twenty-one years old, single, and knew no one. I felt extremely lonely.

One day, as I walked up the steps of the schoolhouse, I heard a small, scared whining sound. Peering over the steps, I saw a young puppy looking longingly up at me. The skinny, shaking dog had obviously been abandoned. She had sores all over her body, and her naturally white fur was a matted, dirty brown.

I watched her for a moment, then hurried into the classroom to avoid being late. At the end of the day, I noticed the puppy was still curled up by the steps, looking up at people as they passed by. Over the next two or three days, I saw the local children teasing and being mean to the puppy. She seldom moved from her spot next to the steps, enduring the abuse. The children were especially cruel when she didn't look up at them when they called. Then one day, as I left the school, the puppy came over to me and hit me with those sweet puppy eyes. In that instant, I knew that both the sad little puppy and I needed each other. I picked her up and carried her home. I carefully bathed her, being gentle with her sores, then wrapped her in a towel and cradled her next to the heat vent to warm her. She ate



and slept peacefully, probably for the first time in her life. In the days that followed, I took her to the vet and learned she was not only deaf but also had impetigo, a disease that caused sores on her body. I treated her sores daily with medication. We began a system of hand signals, and she responded as though she heard every word I said.

Since impetigo is very contagious, I developed the same sores Moe had. Day by day, we consoled each other and healed together. I named the puppy Moe. Every evening, Moe and I would walk the perimeter of town. I became known as "The Dog Lady," as nearly all twenty-five or thirty of the town's stray dogs joined us. Moe was always the leader, and we looked like an army marching in line. When we returned to my house, each dog received a meal before disappearing, only to join us again the next

night. Moe and I found each other at a time when we both needed a friend. When I left Toyah two years later, Moe came with me. We had perfected our hand signals to the point that no one knew she was deaf. We went everywhere together for over thirteen years. Moe was one of the most devoted and loving friends I've ever had. I buried her under the lilac tree in my backyard. Every year when the lilacs bloom, I'm reminded of the great years I spent with Moe. The best part of my time on the reservation was finding that lost, lonely little puppy—my friend Moe.

You never know when or where you'll find a lifelong friend. In many cases others get overlooked and forgotten. Even when you feel completely alone, there is someone who needs you as much as you need them.



Reaching out to someone in need builds both the giver and the receiver. It's like the synergy formula that states one plus one equals three. In other words, when two friends come together, the synergy of their relationship is much greater than just the sum of the parts.

#4: When You Need Some Peace and Rest, Go to Your Special Spot

Quote: "I like the way the world is made...with part in the sun and part in the shade...This comfortable spot beneath a tree...was probably planned for you and me."
—Burgess Johnson

One of the things I've observed with all the dogs I know is that each has a unique spot they retreat to for relaxation. These spots are usually remote, shielded from the elements, and away from the bustle of everyday life. Here, a dog can enjoy a bone, take a nap, or simply waste away the day. On cold winter days, they seem to instinctively find the sunniest spot to soak in warmth.



Dogs have an uncanny ability to discover their special spots, providing them with shelter and comfort even in the most adverse weather conditions. I remember the day I built Freckles a doghouse, ensuring he would stay warm and cozy. My grandpa, Rad Nelson, a dairy farmer with decades of experience raising outside working dogs, came over to inspect my handiwork. He

looked at the insulated exterior, the soft carpet inside, and the special shingles I laid on the roof with Freckles' name painted above the entrance.

"Al," he asked, a bemused look on his face, "why are you spending so much time and money on such an elaborate doghouse?"

"It's to keep the dog warm on cold nights," I replied, a bit defensively.

"I'll give you \$500 for every dog you find frozen to death."

In that moment, it dawned on me that I had never seen a frozen dog. I didn't yet understand the "special spot theory."



Freckles' special spot was outside in the sun, tucked away around the corner from the shed. My son Brian had two dogs: Dakota, our Malamute, and Rutger, our Rottweiler, who both found a cool, shady corner behind the bushes as their refuge. Melissa, my daughter, had two Pomeranians, Bear and Bailee; for them, their favorite spot was in a sheltered corner of the yard, protected from the wind and rain. Often, these dogs would retreat to their special spots to nap or simply bask in the moment. There's a profound lesson in this: we all need to find a special spot to retreat to, a place where we can relax, recharge, or simply meditate. Dogs seem to have mastered the art of relaxation, reminding us of the importance of self-care. In Freckles' final weeks, he frequently sought out his special spot, where he found warmth and comfort in the sun. Watching him there, I understood

that getting away from the chaos of daily life to a peaceful, protected, and secluded



space can be a perfect remedy for the soul.

So, I encourage you to embark on a search for your own "sunny spot." It might be a nook in your backyard, a quiet corner in a park, or even a cozy chair by the window. Taking time for yourself in a special spot might just be the remedy you didn't know you needed.



Lesson #5: Go Dig a Hole

Quote: "All dogs except man know that the ultimate of life is to enjoy it."

—Samuel Butler

"Some days you're the dog, some days you're the hydrant."

—Unknown

The Tale of Bailey the Beagle: Bailey was a Beagle with a passion for digging holes and burying treasures. In fact, she had two obsessions: digging and leather. Every day, Bailey would venture over to a nearby construction site, where she delighted in stealing workmen's leather gloves. On a good day, she'd come home with several pairs and bury them deep in the soft earth of her owner's garden. The construction

workers were baffled by the mysterious disappearance of their gloves, never suspecting that a crafty little Beagle was the culprit! Marsha, Bailey's owner, would frequently unearth these buried treasures while tending to her flowerbeds. She was always perplexed to find gloves that seemed to appear out of nowhere, not knowing that her sneaky dog was the source of this daily mystery. Every time Bailey ventured out in search of leather, she would return with a new bounty, burying it in the rich, dark soil.

One day, as Marsha was planting tulips, she stumbled upon something unexpected—a leather wallet buried in the dirt. Bailey had found it next to a pair of gloves at the construction site, thinking the wallet would be a delightful addition to her collection. Unbeknownst to Bailey, she had also buried a DUI ticket belonging to the wallet's owner. Marsha opened the wallet to discover a little money and the citation. Curiosity piqued, she reached out to the person cited on the ticket, eventually speaking with his mother. The wallet belonged to a construction worker who had faced trouble the night before for drunk driving. He had realized his wallet was missing while standing before the judge, mistakenly blaming his coworkers for the theft. Later that day, his parents called him, letting him know that they had not only his wallet but also the ticket he desperately needed for his court appearance.



There's a certain magic in getting your hands dirty and digging in the garden, watching as the dark soil comes to the surface. I encourage you to go out and dig a hole somewhere, maybe even bury something of your own. Dogs teach us that there's a therapeutic quality to digging—a way to release the burdens we carry and to let go of what no longer serves us.

Sometimes, things in life just need to be buried and forgotten. Digging a hole can symbolize the process of moving on, shedding what weighs us down. Just remember it's best to leave the DUI citations above ground!

If Someone Is Having a Tough Time, Just Be Silent, Sit Close to Them, and Nuzzle Up to Them Gently

Quote:

"A dog teaches a boy fidelity, perseverance, and to turn around three times before lying down."

—Robert Brenchly

Dogs have an extraordinary knack for knowing exactly when we need them. They seem to have an unspoken understanding of when to playfully bark, when to lead us on a walk, and most importantly, when to simply sit quietly by our side. This innate wisdom to just be is a profound skill, one that often surpasses human understanding.



When life throws its inevitable challenges our way, dogs don't offer advice or words of wisdom. Instead, they provide a silent, steady presence. They

gently nuzzle their way into our space, their warmth and quiet companionship speaking volumes.

Have you ever observed a dog finding its perfect resting spot? It's an intricate ritual. First, they saunter up with that unhurried gait, signaling their intention to settle in. Then, the real work begins: a symphony of pawing, nudging, and circling. It's as though they're crafting a masterpiece of comfort, shaping a perfect nest that promises the ultimate rest.

This process, while seemingly simple, carries a profound lesson. It's about effort and intention in creating a space of comfort—not just for themselves, but for those around them. They instinctively know how to nestle into the coldest or most painful spot on your body, their warm, furry presence acting as a gentle balm.



There's something deeply powerful about approaching someone in need without words, just sitting close, offering warmth and quiet solace. Dogs

embody this art of silent support, demonstrating that sometimes, the greatest gift is simply being there. No grand gestures or wise words are needed—just the act of being present, of sharing the quiet. This form of comfort speaks louder than any words ever could. Next time you notice someone struggling, take a lesson from our canine companions. Be the silent presence they need. Offer them the warmth of your closeness, the comfort of your silent understanding. Sometimes, all someone needs is a big, human "dog" to nuzzle up and remind them that they're not alone.



Lesson #7: Never Trust a Dog to Guard Your Food.

"Dogs feel very strongly that they should always go with you in the car, in case the need should arise for them to bark violently at nothing right in your ear."

—Dave Barry



Dogs are loyal guardians of many things—your home, your car, even your heart. But your sandwich? Absolutely not. Trusting a dog with your lunch is like trusting a child with a jar of cookies—temptation always wins.

Take, for instance, the classic trick where a dog patiently balances a biscuit on its nose, eyes locked on the prize, waiting for the magic words: “Take it.” We marvel at their discipline, but let's be honest—the dog isn't exercising self-control out of moral superiority. It's a calculated performance. They know the good stuff—steak, cheese, bacon—is coming right after the charade.



Dogs have mastered the art of food appreciation. If you want to see your dog perform a Broadway-worthy act, just dangle a piece of pizza or bacon. Tricks you didn't even know they knew suddenly emerge. It's not about obedience or talent; it's about the reward. And who can blame them? Imagine eating the same bowl of kibble day after day. Wouldn't you do backflips for a change of menu?

Lesson #8: Sharing Your Treats Can Help You Gain a Lot of Friends.

"It's amazing how a tasty treat in a pocket can instantly bring out the best in dog and man."

—Al Jensen

One of the best singles ads ever reportedly ran in *The Atlanta Journal*:



SINGLE BLACK FEMALE seeks male companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I'm a very good-looking girl who LOVES to play. I enjoy long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping, and fishing trips. Cozy winter nights lying by the fire are my favorite. Candlelight

dinners will have me eating out of your hand. Call (404) 875-6420 and ask for Daisy; I'll be waiting...

Over 15,000 hopefuls found themselves speaking to the Atlanta Humane Society about adopting an 8-week-old black Labrador retriever named Daisy. The ad's brilliance wasn't just in its humor but in its undeniable truth—dogs have a way of capturing hearts.

Take Gus, the neighborhood's lovable Terrier mix, and his owners, Pam and Jack. Their secret to community charm lies in their pockets—stuffed with gourmet dog treats. These aren't your bargain bin specials; these are high-end, hard-to-pronounce delicacies like IAMS or Ikebana. On occasion, Jack even carries doggy animal crackers shaped like cats or fish—though, after tasting one, I can confirm they're not bad if you're in a pinch.



Pam and Jack's daily walks are a parade of wagging tails and eager eyes. Dogs from every corner of the neighborhood follow, lured by the promise of those delightful treats. And as the dogs gather, so do the humans. Treats not only build canine friendships but also create a bridge to human connections.



Pam, Jack, and Gus are living proof that a little generosity can turn strangers into friends and a neighborhood into a community. Sharing treats, whether with dogs or people, has a magical way of spreading joy and fostering bonds.

So, whether you're looking to win over a pack of dogs or a group of new friends, remember the power of a small gesture. In the words of Pam and Jack's canine entourage: never underestimate the value of a good treat.

Lesson #9: Use Your Common Street Smarts.



Freckles, my Border Collie mix, was smarter than many people I've met. He wasn't just book-smart—he had what I'd call "doggy street smarts." Freckles could read situations, anticipate actions, and, in some uncanny way, seemed to understand my family on a deep level. He even knew my kids by name.

I know it sounds far-fetched, but Freckles had a knack for playing hide-and-seek. My kids would scatter and hide, and I'd send Freckles off to find them, calling out their names. Without fail, he'd locate each one and report back. It wasn't just a lucky guess—he truly knew who was who. Freckles also had a talent for "reading." I'd lay out objects—a ball, stick, toy, or biscuit—and show him a card with one of the object's names written on it. Without hesitation, Freckles would pick up the correct item and bring it to me. Critics might say it was a trick, but I knew better. Freckles wasn't just playing along; he understood.



Freckles was born for agility, but his owner?

Not so much. This brings me to my adventure at the Tree House—a fitness center more suited for bodybuilders than your average Joe. Somehow, my daughter convinced me to join her for a workout, handing me a free pass to this spandex-clad sanctuary of fitness. In fact it earned that new name of “Adultery house” considering the many unsanctioned relationships that flourished there. I stood out like a sore thumb in my “Draper Days Volunteer” T-shirt and retro gym shorts. My lily-white legs, accentuated by tube socks and Converse sneakers, made me practically invisible against the gym’s fluorescent lights and look like Casper the friendly ghost against the background of well-formed and well-tanned members.

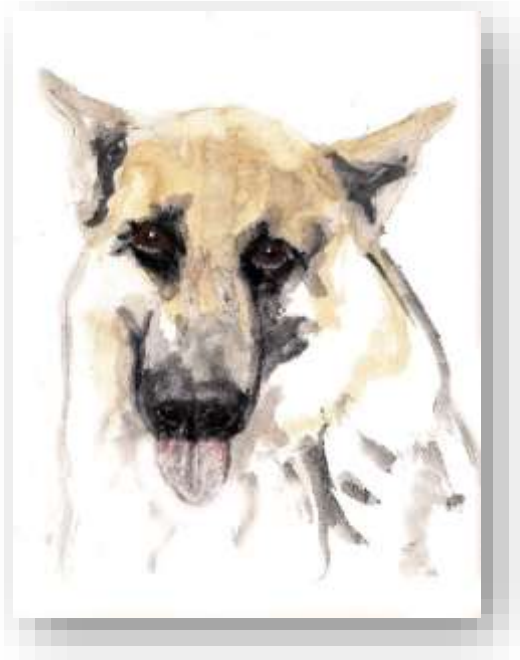
Melissa, my daughter, wisely steered me toward the treadmill, thinking it was foolproof. After a bit of button-mashing, I managed to get the machine moving. Next to me, Melissa was breezing through her workout, while I struggled to keep pace. My attention was quickly diverted by the wall of TV screens, one of which featured a Purina Dog Chow-sponsored dog agility competition. Naturally, the star was a Border Collie, just like Freckles.

As I watched, lost in the spectacle of canine athleticism, I imagined myself and Freckles winning such a contest. In my daydream, Freckles and I were unstoppable, flying through the obstacle course with grace and precision. Unfortunately, reality had other plans. The treadmill's speed subtly increased, but my mind was elsewhere, entranced by the dogs on the screen. Before I knew it, I was drifting to the side of



the treadmill.

In one heart-stopping moment, my foot slipped, catching the edge of the treadmill. I was catapulted off the machine, straight into the unfortunate runner behind me. Like a domino effect, one toppled into another, sending the whole treadmill pavilion into chaos. Melissa, witnessing the scene, promptly disowned me, slipping away without a trace of recognition.



After a considerable time Melissa stealthily returned to her dad and stated lifting weights in the corner of the facility would be far from any recognition. As I approached the weights I realized some younger ladies lifting dumbbells. I then concluded that if they can lift the weight exhibited on their

dumbbells I could double the weight easily and show the world how my manly strength and demonstrating my prowess to the women lifting the dumbbells.



I went over and picked up the weights as my daughter was consumed working with another weight device. I sat on the weight bench as I saw the two women doing and laid on my back. I proceeded to put the weights in the air and slowly lower them behind my head. To my shock the weights exceeded the ability to control them and I realized that my manly muscles had severely atrophied I then felt myself rolling backwards on the bench and did a complete backwards somersault

and landed squarely the floor. The loud clank of the weights triggered the attention of everyone in the weight area including my daughter. Once again she refused to acknowledge me and left without my knowledge. I carefully put the weights back and headed out the door of the Treehouse. With my head low, my white knee socks, tight old basketball shorts and draper days t shirt I walked to my car only to see my daughter there with a look on her face that let me know you will never come to the Treehouse with me again.

Freckles, no doubt, would have excelled in that agility competition. Me? Well, let's just say agility might not be my strong suit. But hey, at least I've got street smarts—just like Freckles.



Lesson #10: Try Unconditional Love—It Really Works

"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself."
—Josh Billings

"Animals are such agreeable friends; they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms."
—George Eliot

Freckles and I spent countless afternoons visiting local retirement homes. Over time, I came to realize that he was a better friend and visitor than most humans,

including me. I would walk into a room filled with people weighed down by sickness, dementia, and Alzheimer's, feeling the air heavy with sadness. Freckles, however, trotted in with his tail high, like he was about to reunite with a room full of long-lost friends.

Without fail, he'd go straight up to each person, pressing his cold nose into their hand as if to say, "I'm here for you." Instantly, as though he'd sparked a little charge in them, they'd perk up, eyes brightening. Freckles' cold nose spoke louder than words, inviting them to pet him, scratch his ears, or let him dole out a few slobbery doggy kisses. They responded to his love—a kind that required nothing, asked nothing, and came without conditions.

So many of the people we met had been placed in these care facilities, away from their families, like they'd become separate from the world. Freckles didn't see their ailments. Dementia, Alzheimer's—he knew nothing about these words. All he knew was that each of them was another soul in need of love. Whether they laughed, cried, or stayed silent, he treated each one with the same respect and adoration.

There was one woman, blind and frail, who was captivated by him. Freckles simply sat there with his head on her knee, content in the silence. She ran her fingers across his fur, and it was as if he absorbed her pain, taking it into himself just by being there. Freckles showed me that, though the world often sees these people as

lost, broken, or beyond repair, he saw a person worthy of his love—no questions asked.



Why can't we all be more like Freckles, open to loving others without judgment or expectation? I may not have a cold nose to nuzzle into someone's hand, but I do have a heart. Maybe I can offer a bit of the warmth Freckles shared so freely, reaching people where they're at without needing words. The lesson he taught me was simple: sometimes the most powerful connection comes when you give without expecting anything back.

Lesson #11: Get Dressed Up Once in a While

"Don't forget that it's the right clothes that make the dog."

—Al Jensen

There's something irresistibly funny about dogs in costumes, especially when they act like they're born to wear them. Take Bear, a six-inch whirlwind of energy who struts around in his black leather "biker" gear. Picture it: a mini Hell's Angel, furiously racing around the house like he's ready to join the Hells Angels at a moment's notice.

Every season, Bear had a look. In the spring, he'd don his "Where Are All the Babes?" muscle shirt, and in the winter, he'd bundle up in a cozy sweater.

Summertime? Out came the swimsuit. And Halloween was, of course, a whole new level. I'd catch myself laughing every time I saw him, and it seemed he enjoyed the spotlight.



Then there was Rutger, the Rottweiler who wore sunglasses as if he'd been born with them. He'd strut around with the swagger of a movie star, practically daring anyone to challenge his coolness. Dakota, meanwhile, was all about the rugged look. He wore his harness proudly, as if he were saying, "Yep, I'm the toughest dog around." And he had the muscle to back it up, happily pulling sleds, logs, and anything else he could find.

During the holidays, Freckles got his own share of costumes. Each Christmas, I'd dress him in a Santa suit and struggle to keep a pair of cloth reindeer horns upright on his head. We'd go from door to door, caroling as Freckles pranced beside me, his

reindeer horns wobbling in every direction. Watching people's faces light up as we sang brought a joy that went beyond just the two of us. Those little antlers—and Freckles' spirit—had a way of warming hearts, even on the coldest of days.

Sometimes, a little costume can go a long way. Don't forget that a bit of "dress-up" now and then can bring out the inner joy we often leave tucked away. Freckles, Bear, and Rutger wore their outfits proudly and taught me that the right clothes—or maybe just the right attitude—can truly make the dog.

Lesson #11: Take Some Time Each Day to Smell the Good Earth

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

—Unknown



If you've ever watched a dog step outside, nose lifted to catch the air, you've seen pure joy in action. For a dog, smelling isn't just a sense—it's a way to experience life. While we humans might overlook details in our rush to move from one place to another, dogs pause to smell and savor every moment, grounding themselves in the present.

Freckles was no different, his nose leading him on invisible trails of scent only he could detect. He'd sniff a blade of grass, then lift his nose to the wind, taking in information that seemed written in a language all his own. It was his daily ritual,

and I often felt that Freckles was closer to nature's rhythm than I could ever be.



A dog's sense of smell is remarkable. Bloodhounds, for instance, can detect scents left days ago, while Beagles' noses are so sensitive that they're trained to detect contraband in airports. And then there are avalanche dogs, trained to smell humans buried deep beneath layers of snow, using their sense of smell as a lifeline in rescue missions. Their dedication is tested not only by their ability to locate someone but also by their determination to retrieve their reward. Avalanche dog trainers say that a truly dedicated dog will latch onto its toy so fiercely that you'd have to lift it off the ground to make it let go.

This dedication reminded me of the importance of taking moments to connect deeply with the world around us. In spring, when new leaves unfurl and the earth seems to wake, there's a symphony of scents in the air if we'd only slow down and notice. Perhaps we, too, could use a reminder to do less talking and more breathing in the good earth. Freckles taught me that there's a whole world of beauty in a single



breath—if you take the time to notice.

Lesson #12: Learn to Be Obedient and Follow Clear Directions, and You'll Be Amazed at What You Can Do

"Most dogs don't think they are human; they know they are."

—Jane Swan

One summer, I had the privilege of attending the sheep herding championship in Midway, Utah. Border Collies from around the world gathered to compete in an event that demonstrated their incredible intelligence, focus, and obedience. These dogs, including Freckles' breed mates, could guide a flock of sheep through a course based solely on their handler's commands.

Sitting in the bleachers, I watched a Border Collie take his place next to his handler at the bottom of a hill. High above, a small flock of sheep waited, unaware of the challenge to come. At his master's signal, the dog flew up the hill, each step deliberate, but his real work began the moment he reached the sheep. My neighbor, an experienced herder, explained that this first encounter was critical. The dog needed to convey to the sheep that he was in control without being overly intimidating, striking just the right balance to gain their cooperation.



It was fascinating to watch this unspoken communication unfold. The sheep tested the dog's boundaries, while the dog assessed the personality of each sheep, deciding when to apply pressure and when to ease up. Under his handler's short whistle commands, the Border Collie guided the sheep through gates and fields, adjusting his approach whenever one tried to wander. Every whistle was a new cue—each one understood and obeyed without hesitation.

The real test came when the dog had to pen the sheep. Here, he became more assertive, pushing them a little more forcefully yet never breaking their trust. This dance of obedience and instinct was captivating, as was the sheer trust between the dog and his master.

In many ways, it's a lot like life. I've seen people succeed and fail, often depending on their ability to listen, follow, and learn from others. Just like these Border Collies, people who take time to seek guidance, to listen and follow the wisdom of those who

have walked the path before, often find they can achieve more than they ever thought possible. But when we ignore those quiet signals, acting without listening, we often find ourselves lost, with intentions scattered like sheep.

Freckles and his fellow Border Collies remind me of the strength that comes from listening, observing, and acting with purpose. Obedience may sound like a simple



lesson, but it's one that leads to extraordinary results.



Lesson #13: It's Always Better to Walk Way Around the Temptation

"You enter into a certain amount of madness when you marry a person with pets."

—Nora Ephron

Ever had a close call with a fresh pile of horse droppings while out for a walk? One minute you're enjoying the scenery, and the next, you're narrowly avoiding a disaster that could have ruined your brand-new shoes. For most of us, dodging that mess is instinctual. But for dogs? Well, they seem to have other ideas.

Take Sparky, the Jack Russell Terrier, for example. He had a special weakness for horse droppings, which he viewed not as a nuisance but as a delightful treat. Every

time he and his owner, Denza, went for a walk, Sparky's nose would lead him straight to the closest pile of "round, brown delights," as Denza not-so-affectionately called them. She'd try everything to discourage him—shortened walks, the occasional scolding—but Sparky's temptation was always there, like a siren's call in the form of horse dung.



One day, it was time for a final test. They were on their usual horse trail, and sure enough, a fresh pile lay in the distance. Denza braced herself, wondering if Sparky would pass this test. As they approached, you could practically see the gears turning in his head. Finally, Sparky took a deep breath

and veered far around the mess, putting distance between himself and the



temptation. Out of sight, out of smell, out of mind!

Sometimes, when we're faced with our own temptations, it's best to follow Sparky's example. Don't test yourself by getting too close. Just make a wide circle around and keep on walking. Before long, the pull of that "tempting aroma" will be far behind.

Lesson #14: Let Yourself Be Babied Occasionally

"Dachshunds are ideal dogs for small children, as they are already stretched and pulled to such a length that the child cannot do much harm one way or the other."
—Robert Benchley



One day, I ran into Ron and Michelle, two wonderful people with a knack for kindness—especially toward their pets. These two would do anything for a creature with a heartbeat and a cold nose, and their two dogs, Precious and Jack, were proof of it. Precious, a tiny black-and-white Chihuahua, looked like a sausage with four stick legs and a marble for a head, while Jack, a long, low-to-the-ground Dachshund, was so stout his belly barely cleared the sidewalk.



Walking these two wasn't easy—Precious often vanished in the tall grass, and Jack, well, he left a trail of belly fur wherever he went. So, Ron and Michelle came up with a clever solution: they repurposed an old stroller, turning it into a double-decker dog mobile. I saw them one afternoon, pushing the contraption down the street. Peering into the top compartment, expecting to see a grandchild, I was instead met with Precious' tiny, snarling face, as if to say, "I may be small, but I'm in charge!" Below her was Jack, basking contentedly in the sun.

Watching these two dogs being wheeled around made me think about how sometimes, it's okay to let others pamper us. Being babied doesn't mean we're weak; in fact, it can be a reminder of the love and kindness we all need now and then. So next time someone offers to help or treat you, take them up on it! Letting yourself be babied might just be what you—and the person offering—need.

Lesson #15: Get Out and Do Some Dog Visiting

"Dog visiting is the elixir of life and the cure of all ills."

—Al Jensen

Freckles, my beloved Border Collie-Cocker Spaniel mix, was a social dog if there ever was one. He never met a dog—or human—he didn't want to visit. He'd trot right up to any new dog, go through the typical nose-to-tail introductions, and in no time, he'd be best friends with anyone willing to give him a sniff back.



Dog visiting isn't just about taking your dog for a walk; it's about embracing the art of meeting new people and dogs, using your furry friend as the perfect conversation starter. Dogs, after all, don't hold back. They go right in, make their introductions, and do so without a hint of hesitation. Freckles would be the "middle-dog," breaking the ice, letting me follow up with a friendly hello, and soon enough, we'd be chatting like old friends.



In a world where people often avoid eye contact and barely manage a nod as they pass each other, dogs remind us that breaking the ice doesn't have to be complicated. Their approach may be a little nose-first, but they're fearless in their openness, helping even the most reserved among us reach out and connect.

So, get out there, grab a leash, and do some dog visiting. It's good for the soul, and you might be surprised by how much you gain by simply letting your dog take the lead.

Lesson #15: Get out and do some dog visiting

"Dog visiting is the elixir of life and the cure of all ills."

— Al Jensen

Freckles, my fearless Border Collie-Cocker Spaniel mix, was a master in the art of "dog visiting." He took it upon himself to act as a social ambassador, formally introducing himself to every dog within a five-mile radius, regardless of their size or temperament. Freckles showed me that dog visiting is so much more than just a walk in the park; it's about building a network, one sniff at a time.

Freckles taught me that dogs are natural icebreakers, even with strangers. He'd confidently approach any canine or human without hesitation, employing his sniff-and-nuzzle technique to open doors and start conversations. Before long, I'd find myself caught up in friendly chatter with neighbors I'd previously only exchanged nods with. Freckles showed me that dogs are the ultimate conversation starters—a wagging tail does wonders when words can't quite get the job done.



Lesson #16: Size means nothing

"Act bigger than you are, and you'll be amazed how many big dogs you can intimidate."

— *Al Jensen*

Bear, my neighbor's pint-sized Pomeranian, was proof that attitude counts for more than inches. Weighing in at a whopping ten pounds, he acted like a giant, barking, bouncing, and asserting himself as though he owned the world. Watching Bear's "big dog" attitude in action was both hilarious and inspiring, especially when he made circles around larger dogs who watched, bewildered.



One day, Dakota, my massive 120-pound Malamute, and I decided to take a detour through Sadie's territory—a fearless Yorkshire Terrier who defended her turf with the courage of a lion. As we got close, out came Sadie, barking her tiny head off, charging right at Dakota. To my surprise, my normally brave Dakota backed off, intimidated by a creature who could fit into his food bowl. It was a humbling moment for both of us, as Sadie strutted back with the confidence of a victorious soldier. She reminded me that it's not about the size of the dog in the fight but the size of the fight in the dog.

Lesson #17: Take time to groom yourself often

"In order to keep a true perspective of one's importance, everyone should have a dog that worships him and a cat that ignores him."

— Derske

Watching dogs groom themselves is a reminder that a bit of self-care goes a long way. I often watched Freckles carefully lick his coat clean, grooming his fur with a sense of pride and commitment. If only some humans took their appearance seriously! Aunt Martha had her own grooming technique, though—a classic "spit-shine." She'd lick a handkerchief, swipe it across my face, and somehow remove every trace of Oreo crumbs in the process. As much as I dreaded it, I must admit, it worked.

Dogs might not have fancy tools, but they always seem to look presentable. They teach us that a little maintenance goes a long way—and that a bit of effort in how we present ourselves can leave a lasting impression.

Lesson #19: Don't underestimate the power you have to help others, even if it's only just being there.

"The first duty of love is to be there and listen."

— Paul Tillich

I took Freckles to a children's hospital to visit a group of ten teenagers, ages 14 to 18, who were severely disabled. Some were confined to wheelchairs, others to

movable beds. That day, I witnessed Freckles work his unique magic, approaching each teen as if greeting a long-lost friend. In his Cool Hand Luke style, he positioned himself just right for ear scratches and rewarded each scratch with a kiss, always finding a way to win their hearts.



One girl, paralyzed and confined to bed, invited Freckles to lie next to her head. I learned later she rarely engaged with anyone. But with his charm, Freckles broke through her shell. This was no ordinary magnetism—it was his tongue, his fur, his tail, and his soulful eyes. Watching him, I often saw

teens with tears in their eyes but smiles on their faces. Freckles had a way of making them relax, with their lips curving upward and brows unfurling.

Freckles could reach them in a way that medicine, psychology, or any therapy often couldn't. Something about petting a dog like him had a healing quality, as if the person's pain traveled through their hand and vanished into his fur. It's a type of magic I can't fully explain, but I've seen it work countless times.

Lesson #20: Eat all your food with enthusiasm and gusto.

"When a man's best friend is his dog, that dog has real problems."

— Edward Abbey

Dogs eat with a zest that's hard to ignore. Every time Freckles saw his bowl fill, it was as if he were receiving a Michelin-star meal. Unlike us, dogs don't waste food or pick at it—no piles, no waste, just pure enjoyment. Freckles reminded me of how fortunate we are to have enough to eat, and maybe we could all eat with a bit more gratitude and a little less waste. Sure, we don't have to eat bones like dogs do, but perhaps we can be as grateful for our meals as they are for theirs.

Lesson #21: Enthusiastically wag your tail as much as possible.

"Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."

— Samuel Ullman



One Christmas Eve, I put a pair of brown cloth antlers on Freckles' head. Keeping those antlers upright was no easy task, but we managed. That night, we visited Milt and Erma, an older couple who, unable to have children, found Christmas to be a bittersweet holiday. Milt answered the door, greeted by Freckles, tail wagging so fiercely that the antlers bobbed up and down.

Freckles made his way directly to Erma's room, a space reserved only for her nurse and husband. Erma, bedridden from bone cancer, was resting in the dark. Freckles

quietly found her hand and started licking it, his tail still wagging. Her laughter, high and joyful, filled the room—a rare sound in those times. For a few moments, Freckles and Erma simply enjoyed each other's company, her last Christmas brightened by the simple presence of a dog with antlers and an irrepressible tail wag.

Small gestures can have huge impacts. A friendly hello, a warm hug, or a loving presence can change a person's day, if not their life. Sometimes, it's the smallest kindnesses that steer the biggest ships.

Lesson #22: Pay respect to the ladies in your life.



Tank, a stout Bulldog, had an amusing daily ritual. He would stroll into the local Albertson's meat section, tail wagging and eyes bright, and help himself to a hot dog pack or, on luckier days, a rump roast or T-bone steak. A natural gentleman, Tank would stop respectfully as women shoppers passed by, giving them a nod with his eyes and a wave of his tail, winning smiles as he continued his "shopping."

This became a daily habit until he met the wrong lady—the store manager. She spotted him, discovered his antics, and promptly escorted him to the back room to retrieve his owner's contact info from his collar. Tank sat in the waiting chair, the dreaded place where all apparent robbers sat before receiving their verdict. There he was, looking, looking as innocent as ever knowing that his days stealing meat had come to an end. Kevin, his owner, received the call and ended up covering quite a meat bill for Tank's "shopping sprees."

The lesson here: it's always good to pay respect to the ladies, but maybe make sure one of them isn't the store manager!

Lesson #23: Give Your Friendship and Love Freely to Others

"The dog is a saint. He is straightforward and honest by nature. He knows by instinct when he is not wanted; lies quiet still for hours when his king is hard at work. But when his king is sad and worried, he creeps up and lays his head on his lap. Don't worry. Never mind if they all abandon you. Let us go for a walk and forget all about it."

— Axel Munthe

Sid, a scrappy mutt, was lying in a corner of his cage, awaiting his fate at the dog pound. His fur, matted and unkempt, seemed to reflect the hopelessness of his

situation. He was a day away from being put down, just another forgotten soul in the overcrowded shelter. On the other side of the city, Fred, a businessman, was drowning in his grief after a devastating accident had taken the lives of his wife and two children. The world felt heavy and dark for Fred—there was nothing left to hold him up.



Fred's closest friend, recognizing that Fred needed something to pull him back from the abyss, decided to act. This friend had a therapy dog, a dog who was often used to brighten the lives of the sick and lonely, and he thought that Fred might benefit from such a companion. He knew that Fred wasn't in a place to seek out a dog on his own, so he took it upon himself to visit the dog pound and see if there was a dog that could be a good match.



As he wandered through the shelter, his eyes landed on Sid. Sid wasn't the picture of perfection, far from it. A mix of terrier and who knows what else, he had huge brown eyes framed by long black lashes, and a face that could melt anyone's heart. There was something about him—something that screamed, "*I need you.*" Sid wasn't just any dog; he was the perfect dog for Fred.



The arrangements were made, and Sid was soon on his way to meet his new owner. As fate would have it, the timing couldn't have been more perfect. The day Sid arrived was the anniversary of Fred's child's birthday, and Fred was particularly vulnerable, locked in the weight of his sorrow. When Sid arrived at Fred's door, he wore a big red bow around his neck and a note attached that read, *"I need you as much as you need me."*



Fred opened the door with reluctance, unsure what a dog could possibly do for him. But then Sid looked up at him with those soulful brown eyes and gave him a warm, doggy grin. In that moment, Fred realized that maybe, just maybe, he had a new companion. Sid and Fred became inseparable, each healing the other in their own way. Sid was the perfect antidote to Fred's sadness—loyal, unwavering, and full of love.

Soon, Fred and Sid became a team, visiting nursing homes, hospitals, and schools, spreading joy wherever they went. Fred, who had felt so lost and alone, found solace in giving to others. Sid, who had once been on death's door, found purpose in offering comfort. Together, they brought light to scores of people's lives, showing that sometimes the most unlikely companions can make the biggest difference.



Did one dog and one man make a difference in the world? For all those who encountered Fred and Sid, the answer is a resounding yes. Through their friendship and love, they proved that healing can come in the most unexpected forms.

Lesson #24: Take a Nap When You Need One

"He leads a dog's life,' people cry—But why? All day you do exactly as you feel; You sleep before, and after, every meal. Things would be said If I had so much bed!"
— A.P. Herbert

Bart is my sister-in-law Ruth's dog, and I've come to affectionately call him "The Dog from the Living Dead." If Bart were any more relaxed, he'd be mistaken for a stuffed animal. Seriously, I have never met a dog so perfectly committed to doing absolutely nothing. It's as if Bart has taken it upon himself to redefine the concept of "lazy."



Bart's day consists mostly of sleep. In fact, I've seen him sleep for twenty-four hours straight. If there's a time when he's not napping, it's only because he's making the arduous trek to the bathroom—an effort he takes with the same enthusiasm as a snail crawling across a rock. If Bart could, I'm pretty sure he would avoid leaving the house entirely, especially if he had his own personal potty inside.

Ruth got Bart from the pound for a very specific reason—her husband, Duane, worked nights and she needed a guard dog. I'm sure you're imagining a loyal and

fearless protector, but in Bart's case, his only form of defense would be to fall asleep in the way of an intruder. If a robber broke in, Ruth might be more worried about protecting Bart from harm than worrying about the thief!

Bart's movements are slow and deliberate. When he wants to get down from his sleeping spot, he spends what feels like hours trying to decide how to lower himself, as if performing a complex choreography to the song "Lazy River." Once settled, he's down for the count, and a nap like no other begins. When Ruth needs to take him outside for a bathroom break, she must practically drag him by the leash. The only time he stirs is to walk in slow, dreamlike circles in the yard, as if performing an ancient ritual to find the perfect spot to relieve himself.



Some people might look at Bart and assume he's just a giant, furry paperweight. But Ruth, in her own laid-back way, appreciates him for exactly what he is. Bart doesn't need to do much. He's perfect just as he is—lazy, relaxed, and a wonderful companion for Ruth, who shares his easygoing attitude toward life. Together, they prove that sometimes, doing nothing together is exactly what you need.

Lesson #25: Say "I Love You" with Your Actions

"Eventually you will come to understand that love heals everything and love is all there is."

— Gary Zukav

Rottweilers have a reputation. Thanks to media portrayals of vicious dog attacks, they're often seen as a dangerous breed. But as with most stereotypes, the truth is more complex. The media focuses on the exceptions, not the rule, and often paints a misleading picture of a breed that is, at its core, loyal and protective.

Take Rutger, for example. Rutger is a Rottweiler, and my son Brian brought him home one day as a puppy. Rutger was a bundle of love, and while his size and breed might have made people nervous, he was the sweetest dog you could meet. When Brian's neighbor, Mae, found out he had a Rottweiler, she was understandably wary. But when she met Rutger, all her fears melted away.



Rutger immediately showed his gentle nature, and before long, Mae was inviting him over to visit her grandkids. Rutger had a special gift for making people feel comfortable and loved. One day, when Rutger was visiting during one of Mae's Sunday family meals, he noticed a young boy named Robert, who had Downs syndrome. Robert had always been left out in the crowd, quietly watching as the other kids played. But Rutger saw him, and in a beautiful

display of empathy, Rutger walked over to Robert, sat down beside him, and gently placed his paw on Robert's lap. It was a simple, silent gesture, but it spoke volumes.

Robert's face lit up as he smiled at Rutger. For the first time, Robert felt seen. He wasn't just the "down syndrome boy" in the corner—he was Robert, a boy who had just received the most genuine form of affection from a dog who wasn't concerned about labels or judgments.

Rutger's kindness didn't stop there. He continued to make an impact on everyone he met, showing that love isn't about words—it's about actions. Rutger and Robert formed a bond that would last a lifetime, and in their silent, mutual understanding, they proved that sometimes, love doesn't need to be spoken. It just needs to be shown.



In the end, Rutger's story isn't just about proving the world wrong about Rottweilers. It's about showing that love, true and unconditional, can be found in the most unexpected places—and sometimes, it comes with four paws and a wagging tail.

Lesson #30: Treat everyone when you see them as if they were the most important person in your life.

"No matter how little money or how few possessions you own, having a dog makes

you rich.”
—*Louis Sabin*



I met Gypsy, a longhaired Wiener dog, sitting on top of a trailer bed of a Kenworth 18-wheeler. She just sat there, watching my every move with all the dignity of a dog who knew the road. Gypsy wasn't guarding the trailer in the typical way a guard dog might, but instead sat

prim and proper, as if to say, "I've seen it all." She had traveled to hundreds of truck stops and knew many of the drivers, and more importantly, their ways. As I approached her, she greeted me in the most genteel way. It was as if I had known her for years—no fear, no hesitation, just affection and friendship. It wasn't just the wag of her tail; it was a genuine smile, showing her teeth, as if she were a Southern belle ready to engage in conversation.



Gypsy's owner shared her story with me. One day, while she was out doing her duty in the tall grass, a rattlesnake bit her by surprise. The snake's size and venom should've killed her instantly, but Gypsy's determination to survive, combined with her will to live, helped her overcome the

poison and continue her travels for thousands of miles. This near-death experience gave her a tremendous amount of endurance and character.



It was amazing to watch how Gypsy dealt with rough truckers. These men, often abrasive with other humans, changed completely when they approached her. Many had been through some pretty traumatic things in their lives. The transformation in their demeanor was remarkable—a gentler smile, some charm, and suddenly, their tough exteriors softened. Isn't interesting that with many people it takes a tragic event to increase compassion and love for others. How many people who have experienced a

tragedy in their life are generally the ones who are first there when tragedy strikes another because they can show the greatest sympathy, love and compassion.

Lesson #40: When someone hoses you, learn to shake it off.
"The most affectionate creature in the world is a wet dog."
—Ambrose Bierce



Howie was just a mutt, but one of the best mutts that ever walked this earth. He had that perpetual dog smile that made you

want to stop and scratch him behind the ears. He had that look that said, "Come over here and give me a good pet." Howie's story, however, wasn't as perfect. He had been left to die in a plastic sack outside an Anderson Lumberyard. He chewed his way out of the plastic and sat in the corner of the yard, thin and terrified. The lumberyard owner, seeing the dog, decided to scare him off with a water hose.

Howie took a direct hit from the hose and stood his ground. After another round of water, he was knocked to the ground again and again, but each time, Howie fearlessly stood up. The owner gave up and decided to call animal control.



Tami, however, saw Howie's water torture and decided to save him. She asked the lumberyard owner not to call the pound, explaining she'd take the dog herself. When she approached Howie, he stood his ground, shaking the water off with such vigor that it seemed as though all his fear and anxiety flew off with the shaking motion.

Tami lovingly dried him off with a towel and offered him a McDonald's cup of water. Howie, in his exuberance, managed to wedge his head inside the cup and became an

impromptu McDonald's advertisement as he raced around, bumping into walls with the cup stuck to his head.

Howie is now the perfect icebreaker for meeting new people. His fearless attitude, combined with his lovable nature, makes him the best at dog visiting. He checks on all the neighborhood kids, ensuring everything is safe. Heaven forbid a strange car or person should enter the cul-de-sac without being cleared by Howie, the neighborhood patrol dog. If any intruder poses a threat, he barks until he gets the go-ahead from the community.

So, the next time someone tries to hose you, stand your ground and get ready to shake it off.

Lesson #41: Go play with a ball.

"The dog was created especially for children. He is the God of frolic."

—Henry Ward Beecher



Dakota was a hit with the kids! The neighbor kids would come over and ask if Dakota could play football. They didn't want me or my children involved—just Dakota. I'd get Dakota and head him toward the door, where he salivated in anticipation. About ten young boys were ready to take him on in a game of "tackle the dog." The game's goal was simple: try to get Dakota to the ground and steal the football from him.

Dakota would eagerly grab the ball and attempt to run away, only to be surrounded by kids, tackling him from every angle. There was a lot of rolling, laughing, and trying to bring the 120-pound dog to the ground. Once on the ground, Dakota showed the kids just how powerful a Malamute/Timberwolf combination really was. He'd shake them off one by one, laughing the whole time. By the end of the game, Dakota would reward each boy with a slobbery lick on the lips for their relentless efforts.

A boy, a ball, and a dog—what a combination. It's the perfect formula for an unforgettable childhood.

Lesson #42: You're still beautiful even though you may have been abused and neglected.

"Our dogs will love and admire the meanest of us, and feed our colossal vanity with their uncritical homage."

—*Agnes Repplier*

My daughter responded to an ad offering a Pomeranian dog for sale. She knocked on the door, but when no one answered, she followed the sounds of laughter and shouting to the garage out back. There, she found a tiny dog trembling in the corner of the smoke-filled room. The dog was starving, filthy, and appeared to have been abused. My daughter didn't hesitate. She scooped up the poor creature, feeling its fear from weeks of neglect.



She negotiated a price with the owner, threatened to report them for animal abuse, and brought the dog home. She cleaned it up, offered it a safe place, and slowly introduced it to its new environment. This wasn't the typical dog who'd run to you for affection. Bailee was scared of humans, cowering in the corner whenever anyone came near. It took months of consistent love and patience to reassure her that humans weren't all violent and cruel.

Over time, and with a lot of love, Bailee transformed into a beautiful dog with marvelous golden fur and dark, soulful eyes that could melt anyone's heart. A few more months of careful training, and Bailee would be a dog who could compete with the best.

Sometimes, the most beautiful things are hidden behind rough exteriors, in places that are dangerous and degrading. It's amazing what a little kindness, love, and care can do to bring out the best in others.



Lesson #42: You're still beautiful even though you may have been abused and neglected.

"Our dogs will love and admire the meanest of us, and feed our colossal vanity with their uncritical homage."

- Agnes Repplier

When my daughter responded to an ad for a Pomeranian puppy, she wasn't prepared for what she would find. She knocked on the door, but no one answered. She soon found the source of the noise—laughter and shouting from the garage out back. There, in the corner of the marijuana smoke-filled room, was a tiny, trembling puppy. It was starving, dirty, and clearly abused. My daughter could feel the fear in that little body as she picked it up.



She negotiated a price and threatened to report the people for animal abuse before she brought the dog home. She bathed

it and set it up in a new environment, but Bailee wasn't your typical dog. She didn't rush up with kisses and affection. Instead, she cowered in fear, too used to being mistreated to trust anyone. For months, we offered her continuous love and care, hoping to show her that not all humans were cruel.

With time and dedication, Bailee began to heal. She grew into a magnificent dog with golden fur and dark eyes that melted even the hardest hearts. She is now one of the most beautiful dogs I've ever seen, and with a bit more training, I believe she will be a contender for the best of the best.



Bailee's transformation is a reminder that beauty is often hidden behind a rough exterior, and a little kindness can bring out the

best in others, no matter their past and no matter how they were treated. In fact, I am sure that many of those reading this book at one point in their life have been felt neglected forgotten and left alone.

Lesson #43: Be patient with pups. Remember you were one of them once.

"Every puppy should have a boy."

– Erma Bombeck



Zoie is a Rottweiler puppy, but don't let her size fool you—those giant paws mean she has the potential to be a very large dog. But for now, she's all affection, all the time. Too much affection, in fact. Her slobbery kisses

leave you constantly wiping your face. Zoie's boundless energy is infectious, though her attention span is about as short as a cookie in front of hungry teens.

Despite her enthusiasm, Zoie's playmate is Rutger, a dog that outweighs her by a hundred pounds. Zoie is always biting, tugging, and wrestling with him, but Rutger patiently endures. Sometimes, it's best to just let pups be pups and enjoy the chaos they bring.

Lesson #44: Barking long and loud enough will generally get some attention.

"Don't accept your dog's admiration as conclusive evidence that you are wonderful."
- Ann Landers



How many times have you been woken up by a dog's relentless barking? You lie there, praying for some miracle to stop the noise. You'd think after an hour, the dog would lose its voice, but no—dogs seem to have vocal cords made of titanium. I'm convinced of it. Have you ever heard of a dog getting hoarse?



The dog knows that if it barks long enough, someone will eventually pay attention, though it might not be the kind of attention they want. Humans can be just like this, barking endlessly over trivial things, hoping for attention. Unfortunately, constant noise tends to annoy people rather than get the desired response.

Lesson #45: Don't let someone tie you up with a piece of thread.

"Sometimes all that is holding you back from greatness is an imaginary rope, that in reality is nothing but in your mind is as thick as rope used to hold large ships."

– Al Jensen



Aunt Martha loved her Pug, Puffer, who was the sweetest dog. The best way I can describe a Pug is to imagine a dog that looks like it ran into a wall at 50 miles per hour. With its pushed-in face, it seemed like Puffer had been bumping into walls for years, with hair covering its eyes that made it hard to see.



Aunt Martha would tie Puffer to a chair with a three-foot leash made of sewing thread. The thread was so weak that even an ant could break it, but Puffer didn't know that. Whenever he tried to escape, the slightest tug on the thread would stop him in his tracks. I would sit there, coaxing him to move even an inch, knowing that the leash was no barrier at all.

But for 10 years, Puffer never broke free. He stayed tethered by that fragile thread, missing out on adventures because he didn't realize his limits were only in his mind. How many of us let something small, like a bit of thread, hold us back from

greatness? We stop when we feel a slight tug, even though the path forward is free if we just have the courage to break the imaginary chains.

Lesson #46: Remember the bark is generally bigger than the bite.

"God gave us two ears and one mouth and expects us to use them in that order. "
—Unknown



Sadie, a four-year-old Labrador, has a fearsome bark, but not an ounce of aggression in her. She puts on a grand performance whenever someone approaches her property line, growling and barking loudly as if she were an expert guard dog. Yet, her acts are just for show. Bear, the tiny five-pound Pomeranian, isn't intimidated. He stands boldly in front of Sadie, knowing full well that it's all an act. When Sadie rushes toward him, he gives one small bark, and she cowers away, defeated. Bear, in his quiet confidence, knows that Sadie's bark is much bigger than her bite. It's a reminder that, just like dogs, many things in life seem

threatening at first, but they often pose no real danger. Sometimes, we must recognize that much of what we fear is just noise.

Lesson #47: Learn some new tricks.

"There are times when old dogs should learn new tricks and then times when old dogs should stay old dogs."

—Al Jensen



During my time as a LDS missionary in 1971, I had a memorable experience with a man named Tim and his dog, Tiny. Tim's talent with Tiny, a massive Great Dane, was unlike anything I'd ever seen. Tim was about as tall as Tiny's shoulder. Tiny could perform a variety of tricks, from sitting to rolling on command, to playing dead in an elaborate act that always drew laughter and admiration from any audience. Suddenly Tim reserved the biggest piece of meat

for the final act. Tim stood there stoically and pointed his flesh rifle as if he were shooting him with an imaginary gun. and commanded in a voice that was surprisingly low and manly and said Boom, your dead Suddenly, Tiny massive dog frame hit the



floor with a couple of feet sticking up in the air.

performance was not only a feat of training but a reflection of his bond with Tiny. It reminded me that there's always room for new tricks and growth, no matter your age or experience. Even in adulthood, we can still find ways to learn and evolve, just like Tiny and Tim's extraordinary partnership.

Tim's



Georgie, a Labrador, on the other hand, doesn't quite have Tiny's athleticism but has his own unique talent. Georgie loves jumping on the trampoline with the kids, though his large size and lack of coordination sometimes result in him landing in a thorn bush. He doesn't mind, though—his love for the trampoline never fades. This story reminds us that learning new tricks

doesn't always mean mastering something perfect—it's about enjoying the process and having fun along the way.



Freckles, with his extraordinary intelligence, could perform a wide range of tricks, from high jumps to silent hand commands. Watching him perform was like watching a master at work. But what was most amazing was how he used his tricks to create connections with people, even those with special needs. Freckles showed me that learning new tricks is not just about impressing others—it's about building relationships and making people feel special.



Lesson #48: Never pretend you're something that you're not. "The average dog is a nicer person than the average person."
—Andy Rooney



I've never seen a Malamute try to act like a Poodle or a Weiner dog try to race a Greyhound. Dogs simply embrace their true nature. They don't try to be something they're not. But many humans seem to struggle with this concept. Some try to act rich when they're not, or put on a persona when they're with others, only to behave entirely differently in private. This disconnect between who we are and who we pretend to be only creates confusion and frustration. Dogs remind us that being true to ourselves is the most important thing. We don't need to act like something else to be loved or appreciated; authenticity is always the best approach.

Lesson #49: Trust your instincts. "Big male dogs have an uncanny ability to find attractive human girls."

—Al Jensen



Diesel, a Labrador, played the role of matchmaker for Melinda and her future husband. On a warm summer day by a lake in Logan, Utah, Diesel approached Melinda while she was relaxing on a blanket, and his owner politely apologized for the intrusion. What began as casual dog-related conversation quickly blossomed into something more, and soon, Melinda and the owner exchanged phone numbers. Diesel, knowing just the right moment to make a connection, had unknowingly sparked a relationship. This story is a reminder that sometimes, our

instincts can guide us to the right place, at the right time, and with the right people. Trusting our gut can lead to unexpected yet wonderful outcomes.

Lesson #50: Be careful what you are chasing. Sometimes it runs away or just turns out smelly.

"Even though things don't always turn out the way we hope, the chase is always worth it."

– Al Jensen



Dakota, the Malamute/Timberwolf mix, had great potential as a visiting dog due to his immense size, beauty, and dignity. He was striking to look at, standing as tall as my waist and weighing about 120 pounds, and people would

stop and stare at him wherever we went. However, Dakota had some habits that prevented him from being the ideal visiting dog.

Dakota was notorious for finding the one skunk within a ten-mile radius. He would chase it until the skunk felt cornered, at which point it would spray him. Dakota would then be thoroughly covered in that pungent skunk scent, making him ineligible for dog visiting for weeks. As unpleasant as that smell was, it made its way right through the nose and straight to the stomach.



One night, Dakota showed me his skills as a hunter. He would sneak up on geese swimming in the local pond. I call him the stealth dog,

because he was crouching and moving slowly and carefully watching each movement. . He entered the water without a ripple moving slowly and discreetly. All you could see was two determined eyes and a nose. As he approached you could sense the anticipation of the geese. However, to his dismay The geese, of course, knew he was coming and would swim to the other side just before Dakota could reach them. His frustration was palpable, and in the end, the geese would fly away. Dakota, covered in mud, would retreat, disqualified once again from dog visiting until his next bath.

In the pursuit of our metaphorical golden goose, it is important to enjoy the chase as much as the outcome. Most of the time, that golden goose gets wings and flies away, leaving us with only the memories of the hunt.

Lesson #51: Sometimes you need to break into a song.

"Nothing brings the house down faster than the high shrill of a dog's voice."

– Unknown



Bear loved to sing. Whenever the atmosphere around the house was a little slow, Bear would jump in and sing his latest dog oratorio. He seemed to have an entire repertoire, delivering a mix of songs in different tempos and styles. Some were slow and soulful, others with a rhythm that made you want to dance.



Bear's throne was the highest point in the house, where he would look down at the "peasants" going about their trivial activities. You could see him thinking, "These silly humans, they work so hard when all they need is to be like me—pampered and loved."

I grew up with a dog named Kandie, who also loved to sing, but her talent was more about joining in with the piano. When my sister was learning, her attempts at playing were met with Kandie's attempts at song, creating a cacophony of noise that was enough to make our dad put an immediate end to the practice.

There is something about music that connects us, just like Aunt Martha, who always hummed a song when she was with her dog, Puffer. It might not have been anything extraordinary, but the sound was pleasant, comforting. Music, much like a dog's companionship, is a quick path to the heart.



Lesson #52: You can win a fight without fighting.

"Most fights can easily be resolved without contact."

– Al Jensen

Freckles was fearless. He did not care about the size, weight, teeth, or breed of another dog. If another dog charged at him with aggression, Freckles would outsmart them every time. The attacking dog would rush at him, but Freckles

would dodge to the side, causing the dog to miss. The same move would be repeated until the other dog, exhausted and frustrated, gave up. Freckles would then make a brief gesture towards the dog, a warning that he was in control, but without ever having to make contact.

Over time, the other dogs, recognizing Freckles' calm dominance, would approach him with respect. Without ever showing anger, Freckles taught me the value of resolving conflict with intelligence and patience, not aggression.



One day, an aggressive dog came charging toward us. The owner was just as frantic and aggressive as the dog, shouting commands and waving his arms in frustration. I followed Freckles' example and stayed calm, maneuvering around the situation. The man, clearly exhausted and embarrassed by his lack of

control over his dog, gave up and apologized. That day, I made a new friend—and Freckles once again showed me the power of winning without a fight.

Lesson #53: Indulge in the things you truly love.

"Of course, what a dog most intensely dreams of is being taken out on walks, and the more you are able to indulge him, the more will he adore you and the more all the latent beauty of his nature will come out."

— Henry James



Dakota had a love for food—especially cat food. He would always seek out the best food around, and Snickers, the neighbor's cat, had

the best. Whenever we passed by Snickers' house, Dakota would make a mad dash to get a head start and steal the food from under the cat's nose. Despite my best efforts to keep him on a leash, Dakota would always find a way to circle around, distracting me, and get to the food.



This went on for weeks until Connie, Snickers' owner, finally caught him in the act. Dakota was relentless in his pursuit of those cat food bowls, and even a bag of food as a Christmas gift for Snickers didn't stop him. One day, Dakota attempted his usual move, but he miscalculated. He charged the garage door and got stuck, trying to squeeze under an opening that was just too small for him. It was a comical scene, seeing this 120-pound dog trying to maneuver into a space far too tight.

Pursue your passions with all the determination in the world, but make sure your goals aren't on a collision course with failure—like a dog trying to fit under a six-inch gap in a garage door.

Lesson #54: Be careful what you leave behind.

"It's always nice to leave things at neighbor's and friend's homes. Just make sure that it's edible."

– Al Jensen

Dog droppings are a part of life. No one enjoys cleaning them up, especially if your dog decides to leave one in a neighbor's yard. I've had to borrow a shovel on many occasions to remove my dog's deposits. It's even worse when your dog chooses to leave a present in someone else's yard, and you're caught scrambling to clean up the mess before anyone notices.



Make sure you always carry a shovel and plastic bags when walking your dog—because you never know who might be watching. Cleaning up after your dog could be an opportunity to strike up a conversation with a neighbor, but it's definitely not the most glamorous topic.

Lesson #55: Be there, because others need your company.

"The time comes to every dog when it ceases to care for people merely for biscuits or bones, or even for caresses, and walks out of doors. When a dog really loves, it prefers the person who gives it nothing, and perhaps is too ill to ever take it for exercise..."

– Francis P. Cobbe

Dogs have an uncanny ability to sense your emotions. Whether you're sad, angry, happy, or feeling down, a dog knows. Bear, for example, didn't normally visit with my wife Annie unless there was food involved. But one day, when Annie was feeling a bit forlorn, Bear, sensing her sadness, climbed into her lap and placed himself there, expecting nothing but a belly rub. In that moment, he became exactly what Annie needed—unconditional comfort.



Dogs have an instinctive gift for sensing when people need them. They're often the first to sense a change in their environment, whether it's an earthquake or a person in need of emotional support. Freckles, too, knew when I needed him most, sitting quietly by my side when I was struggling with self-worth.

Just being there, without expecting anything in return, is one of the greatest gifts you can give to others. It's the simple presence that makes the biggest difference, especially in times of need.

Lesson #56: Play games as much as possible.

"A good game always breaks down inhibitions."

– Al Jensen

Dogs are natural-born game players. They love to chase, fetch, and tug, instinctively turning anything into a game. Freckles had a particular fondness for a game I called "bite the water," which involved him chasing the streams from the sprinklers, trying to bite the water as it sprayed out. He would dart from one sprinkler to the next, getting drenched and covered in mud, all in the name of fun.

Freckles also knew certain keywords—like "cat," "bird," and "squirrel"—which would send him into action, racing off at top speed to pursue his target. Despite his best efforts, he never caught the cat, but that wasn't the point of the game. It was all about the chase and the thrill of the hunt.

Dogs remind us to embrace the joy of playing, to live in the moment, and to find fun in the simplest things.

These two lessons carry deep emotional and life-affirming messages, and together they wrap up with a reminder of the powerful influence dogs can have on our lives.

Lesson #57: Don't Be Afraid to Show Your Real Feelings Once in a While

"Maybe there are some areas where, when we are compared to dogs, we come up short. Being called a 'dog' might not be such a bad thing after all."

— John Richard Stephens

"Guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs for the deaf, dog companions for those that live alone... Dogs who comfort the sick and the elderly and befriend lonely children. All over the world there are hundreds of thousands of these faithful animals serving us with their love."

— J. R. E.

It's interesting to tend a dog while the owner is away and watch what happens. The dog goes into a state of mourning. They mope around and act as if the world is coming to an end. They won't eat, sleep, or act normal. All they seem to do is sit by the window and wait for their master to come home. When the owner finally arrives, all heck breaks loose. The dog jumps from a sitting position to six feet in the air into his owner's arms. Then they start to eat, and eat, and eat because they finally get to give up their fast from the last several days.

Nice dogs instantly turn into attack dogs regardless of their demeanor or size when their owner is threatened. I have seen some of the most vicious confrontations from

three-pound Pomeranians. Dogs have an uncanny way of reading the emotions around them. If there is anger, fear, or joy, the dog can sense that emotion and play the role perfectly to their benefit.

The other day I approached a young girl with Rutger, a large Rottweiler. Rutger and I could sense that this girl was scared to death and did everything to avoid the dog. Rutger instantly knew the emotion and put on his best smiling dog lips while sparkling those kind brown eyes. It's as if to say, "I am the most lovable dog ever." It's as though the young girl sensed the invitation and came over and petted him on the head. I have seen him do this time and time again. He just uses his dog charm and convinces everyone that Rottweilers are not the mean vicious dogs that they are purported to be.

Lesson #58: Become a Therapy Dog

"The plain fact that my dog loves me more than I love him is undeniable and always fills me with a certain feeling of shame. The dog is ever ready to lay down his life for me."

— Konrad Z. Lorenz

Bear's debut came when he was commissioned as a therapy dog. He always was dressed to the nines. Melissa, my daughter, would make sure that he was wearing the latest doggie fashion. We took Bear to visit the elderly and people who lived alone. Bear would spread his exuberance over the crowd and light up the group with his charm. All Bear had to be was Bear. No special gestures, no baby talk, no second-



guessing on how to treat these people.

Of course, there was his usual fare of singing, dancing, and just plain clowning around. As he was passed from person to person, you could see the infectious joy enter the soul of these people. Not only would they smile, laugh, and show excitement, they would literally communicate with this creature in ways that are beyond our comprehension. You could see it in their countenance; their eyes would light up, and they expressed in their own special way a connection with this five-pound bundle of energy.



Maybe dogs know something more about visiting and befriending others than we ever could imagine. I truly think that dogs have a connection, unknown to the scientific community, with our elderly friends. It's this human spirit-to-doggy-spirit kind of karma that touches the heart. Bear has a way of getting to the heart instantly. He understands emotion better than the average dog. Melissa was recently sent to the hospital when several blood clots passed into her lungs. Melissa and Bear are so close—they are tied at the hip. Bear knew that Melissa was gone and went into a dog depression. Where is the doggy Prozac when you really need it? He would not eat, sleep, or be normal. No chasing balls, chewing on bones, nothing. Nothing except sitting and hoping Melissa would return.



We got this brilliant idea and snuck Bear into the hospital. I held Bear under one arm when Helga, the constable nurse, met me in the elevator and saw the dog. I tried to keep Bear from moving; to pretend he was a stuffed animal that I just recently purchased at the gift shop. It about worked until Bear flashed those manly doggie eyes at Helga. Of course, Bear's loving nature led him to acknowledge Helga with the typical Bear "dog visiting" gesture. I knew at that moment that Bear would be kindly escorted from the hospital.

"He is a therapy dog," I explained.

Helga looked at me as though I really had something there. "Therapy dog?"

"Yes. He helps others to heal."

Bear then turned on the charm and went right for the jugular on Helga. It was the proven "kiss the hand trick" that won her heart. It must have worked because the nurse went about her business, and Bear and I went to visit Melissa.

Bear instantly could sense that Melissa was sick. It's so interesting to watch the small gestures and movements that dogs do when someone is



ill. Nothing very overt. They just subtly make the right moves so that the patient really feels the love from the dog. It's something that I have never seen a human perform. I think it's the emotional connection, that sixth sense that a dog has, to immediately read the situation at hand and respond with the perfect gestures. Scratch my head, rub my furry legs, receive my kisses—those are the medicines that are diagnosed.



This therapy has tremendous mental and physical healing power. Maybe it's the dog that should be teaching medical doctors something about the power of healing. Dogs excel in loving unconditionally the kind of love that has no boundaries. Dogs can just enter a room, rest their head on your leg, or jump up on the bed and say, "Scratch my head and all the pain will go away." Dogs are a

miraculous cure. If someone could bottle a dog's love, they would be billionaires! I call it the "cold nose medicine" prescribed by Dr. Dog. Used for hurt, pain, and distress. Take one cold nose and an ear scratch, a lot of rest, and find out that these cares seem to melt away.

It has been proven that interaction with a dog helps with the healing process. Most scientists believe that it's a result of petting the dog, but it's much more than that. There is an emotional connection that goes on that is very therapeutic. It's as if the patient has really made a connection with another living thing that offers nothing more than the healing power of unconditional love. It's an interesting form of medicine, and I feel that more healing has come from dogs than many of the medications or medical treatments available today.

Lesson #59: Be Loyal to Your Friends Because Someday They Will Be Gone



"Dogs have given us their absolute all. We are the center of their universe. We are the focus of their love and faith and trust. They serve us in return for scraps. It is without doubt the best deal man has ever made."

— Roger Caras

My dog lived for sixteen years. He was just like a member of the family. He grew up with my kids and was in all of the family photos. He was with me when I sang and visited people. He ran with me in the mountains. I don't think any other dog could ever replace Freckles.



When Freckles died, a part of me died. I knew Freckles was dying when he would stop chasing the birds, playing catch, or just being the great visiting dog that he was. Great visiting dogs are the toughest ones to say goodbye to. Not only do I miss him, but also everyone who has associated with Freckles misses him. Many cards from Freckles' friends and admirers expressed their sorrow and grief. Even Connie and Snickers expressed their grief by sending flowers and a nice card.



What I miss most about Freckles is him just being there. I sometimes hang my arm down to my side and wait for his cold nose and face to bury them, but nothing happens. I remember his last day. Freckles was just dying. He was in pain and starving himself, and finally, I had had enough. Melissa, Annie, and I took him to the vet, where I held my visiting dog in my arms and said one last goodbye.



The vet came in and gave him a shot that put him to sleep. There were tears in my eyes as I felt his stiff, rigid body go limp. No more chasing the bird, fetching the ball, or dog visiting trips. It was over. The world's greatest visiting dog had gone to the other side with all the other great visiting dogs. Melissa and I carefully put Freckles in a box with all his prize possessions, his favorite toy, his blanket, and deer antlers. I covered him with a blanket and buried him behind our shed. I said one last prayer of thanks for a great friend and blessed him that he would continue to bring joy to hundreds of other people. I covered the wooden box with dirt and placed a concrete stone over his gravesite that had Freckles' name and footprints on it, a most appropriate tombstone for a great friend.

God said we need something that reminds us of good times and warm feelings—
that's why he has created great dogs.



Finale, I hope this book has helped see a unique perspective of dogs God was right bringing them here. Can you imagine this world without our furry friends? So next time you look at your dog or another dog remember they are here for a reason. Their existence lets us know that dogs in

many ways are here to teach us lessons that can change and enhance the path of our lives forever.

