

Darling Dog

For Dog Lovers, By Dog Lovers

JANUARY 2025

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A dog's only flaw as a species is that they don't live long enough, but the warmth they give us never goes away." Kirk Herbstreit spoke these words on ESPN's *College Gameday* a few days after losing his beloved Golden Retriever, Ben. It was part of a wonderful tribute to college football's favorite pup.

As dog people, most of us have experienced this void. This emptiness. Dogs bring us so much joy and happiness we forget what it is like not to have them around. The nose nuzzling, the pitter patter of feet coming to greet you at the door, the nap right on top of you without a care in the world. We all have different special memories of our passed-on-pups, but the common theme is love!

At *Darling Dog*, we hope to help you preserve those memories! By posting your dog's obituary, you can save their memory forever! You can share with your friends via email or social media! Your dog's memory will be archived in *Darling Dog* for you to return to as often as you like! We will randomly select a few posted obituaries each month to highlight in each issue as well!

We would love to see your dog photos as well! Post freely and enjoy!

Beau Boyd
Editor, *DarlingDog.com*

Charlie's Big Adventure

A POTTY TRAINING ODYSSEY

In the quaint town of Willow Creek, nestled among rolling hills and verdant fields, lived Alex and Sophie with their newly adopted golden retriever puppy, Charlie. Charlie was more than just a pet. He was the embodiment of joy, with his fluffy, golden coat; warm, expressive eyes; and an ever-wagging tail that spread happiness wherever he went.

Alex, a thoughtful boy with a keen interest in nature and animals, and Sophie, a spirited girl with a creative mind and a nurturing heart, had long dreamed of having a puppy. They promised to share the responsibilities, from feeding and walks to training and—most daunting of all—potty training. They approached this challenge with determination, armed with advice from books, online forums, and a local puppy class they attended together.

The initial days of Charlie's arrival were filled with laughter, cuddles, and, unfortunately, numerous little accidents. Charlie, curious and eager to explore every nook and cranny of his new home, seemed oblivious to the concept of potty training. Alex and Sophie quickly realized that this task would require more than just love; it would need patience, consistency, and teamwork.

The siblings started with establishing a routine. They took turns waking up early to take Charlie outside, hoping the fresh morning air would encourage him to do his business. They celebrated his successes with treats and praise, making every effort to instill good habits. Yet, for every step forward, there seemed to be a step back. Accidents were frequent, and the house soon bore the marks of Charlie's learning curve.

Despite the challenges, Alex and Sophie's resolve did not waver. They kept a close eye on Charlie, learning to read his cues and understand his behavior. They discovered that Charlie tended to circle and sniff when he needed to go, a subtle signal they learned to act on immediately. With each day, they grew more attuned to Charlie's needs, and slowly, the accidents began to diminish.



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One particularly memorable day, after several weeks of diligent effort, Charlie paced by the door and whined, a clear sign he had learned to communicate his needs. Rushing to open the door, Alex and Sophie beamed with pride as Charlie dashed outside and did his business. It was a milestone moment, a testament to their hard work and Charlie’s ability to learn.

However, the journey was far from smooth. There were setbacks, moments of frustration, and days when it seemed all their efforts were in vain. A rainy week posed new challenges as Charlie hesitated to go outside, leading to a few indoor accidents. This tested their patience but also taught them to adapt, using puppy pads and reinforcing training with gentle reminders and positive reinforcement.

As the siblings navigated the ups and downs of potty training, they learned valuable lessons about responsibility, perseverance, and the importance of compassion. They realized that every mistake was an opportunity to learn and grow, not just for Charlie, but for themselves as well.

The experience brought Alex and Sophie closer together, strengthening their bond as they worked towards a common goal. They shared laughter and frustrations, celebrated successes, and supported each other through the challenges. Their commitment to Charlie’s well-being and training fostered a deep, unbreakable bond among the trio.

Months passed, and Charlie grew into a well-behaved, loving dog who had become an integral part of Alex and Sophie’s lives. He no longer had accidents indoors, and he waited patiently by the door whenever he needed to go outside. The siblings’ hard work had paid off, and they couldn’t be prouder of Charlie’s progress.

Looking back on their journey, Alex and Sophie realized how much they had learned about patience,

understanding, and unconditional love. Potty training Charlie was just the beginning of many adventures they would share. They looked forward to each new day with Charlie, ready to explore, learn, and grow together.

As the sun set over Willow Creek, casting a golden glow over the fields, Alex, Sophie, and Charlie sat on their porch, enjoying the peace of the evening. The siblings had faced the challenge of potty training with determination and love, emerging stronger and more connected. With Charlie by their side, Alex and Sophie were ready to embark on new adventures, knowing that together, they could tackle any challenge that came their way. 🐾



MEET NATALIE SMITH

Hey there! I’m Natalie Smith, a 24-year-old born in Crescent City, California, who now calls Bend, Oregon, home. If you’ve never been to Bend, let me tell you—it’s basically the dog capital of Oregon. I’m pretty sure dogs outnumber people here! My love for animals (especially dogs) and writing has been with me since I was a kid, and now I get to share that passion through my articles. Oh, and I just became a mom to a baby boy named Milo, which means my hands are officially full—with diapers, dog treats, and coffee! Life feels complete, and a little chaotic, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. Stick around for some helpful dog tips and maybe a few parenthood laughs along the way!

Caring For Your Golden Oldie

A GUIDE TO SENIOR DOG WELLNESS

As our loyal companions age, their needs evolve, just like ours do. Senior dogs bring years of love, wisdom, and joy into our lives, but they also require special care to keep them comfortable, healthy, and happy in their golden years. In this edition of *Dogster's Corner*, I'll provide practical tips for supporting your senior dog through this precious stage of life.

RECOGNIZING THE SENIOR STAGE

Most dogs are considered seniors between 7 and 10 years of age, depending on their breed and size. Larger breeds tend to age faster, while smaller breeds may not show senior characteristics until later. Key signs of aging include reduced energy, graying fur, stiffness, or difficulty moving. These changes don't mean your dog's best days are behind them; they just signal that it's time to adjust your approach to their care.

SUPPORTING MOBILITY

As dogs age, joint pain and arthritis are common issues. You might notice your dog struggling to climb stairs, jump onto furniture, or get up after lying down. Here are some ways to support their mobility:

- **Provide Comfort:** Orthopedic dog beds can alleviate pressure on joints.
- **Assist with Movement:** Pet ramps or stairs make it easier for your dog to access favorite spots.
- **Use Supplements:** Talk to your vet about joint supplements containing glucosamine and chondroitin or omega-3 fatty acids for anti-inflammatory benefits.
- **Stay Active:** Gentle exercise, like short walks or swimming, helps maintain muscle tone and joint flexibility without overexertion.

MONITORING COGNITIVE HEALTH

Cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS), similar to dementia in humans, can affect older dogs.

Symptoms may include disorientation, changes in sleep patterns, or forgetting previously learned behaviors. While CDS can't be cured, you can help slow its progression:

- **Mental Stimulation:** Engage your dog with puzzle toys or new training exercises to keep their mind sharp.
- **Routine:** Stick to a consistent daily schedule to reduce anxiety.
- **Dietary Adjustments:** Foods enriched with antioxidants and essential fatty acids may support brain health.

ADAPTING NUTRITION

A senior dog's metabolism slows down, and their nutritional needs may change. Consider these adjustments:

- **Portion Control:** Overfeeding can lead to obesity, which puts additional stress on aging joints.
- **Specialized Diets:** Senior dog foods are formulated to be lower in calories but rich in essential nutrients like fiber and protein.
- **Hydration:** Ensure your dog has easy access to fresh water to prevent dehydration, especially if they have kidney or urinary health concerns.

REGULAR VET CHECK-UPS

Preventative care is vital for senior dogs. Schedule biannual vet visits to monitor their health and catch potential issues early. Blood tests, dental exams, and discussions about pain management can go a long way in maintaining their quality of life.

THE POWER OF LOVE AND PATIENCE

Caring for a senior dog requires a little extra time, effort, and patience, but it's also an incredibly rewarding experience. Your older dog has given you years of unconditional love and companionship. Now it's your turn to return the favor. A warm bed, gentle walks, and lots of cuddles go a long way in making their golden years truly golden.

If you have specific questions about your senior dog's care, don't hesitate to reach out to your veterinarian. After all, there's no greater joy than helping our furry friends age gracefully and comfortably. 🐾

MEET DR. MAX HARPER, DVM

Dr. Max Harper, DVM, is a practicing veterinarian with a passion for educating pet parents about all things canine. He believes every dog deserves a long, happy, and healthy life.



“What’s Up With My Pup?”

QUESTION FROM: DOES HE NOT LIKE ME?

For a 5-pound animal, my dog can be 100 pounds worth of stubborn. As hard as I try, I can’t get him to come to me. I’m pretty sure he knows the command, and he will do it from time to time, but very rarely. What am I doing wrong?

ANSWER: You know the old expression, “It’s not you, it’s me”? In this case, that is partially true and partially not.

Dogs range wildly in their discipline level and response to commands. If we were all professional trainers, that variability would be a lot tighter, but in reality, most of us are somewhat inconsistent in our training and so our dogs don’t always take us seriously.

“Really? You want me to come over there? What’s in it for me?” This is probably word-for-word what your dog is thinking.

One of the quickest ways to overcome this is to provide an answer to that question, i.e., provide a treat when the dog complies. Of course, this should only be used as a training tool and not a long-term solution, but your dog will soon learn that there is something in it for him.

Another terrific method is to make coming to you sound like the most exciting thing that will happen to your furry friend all day. Raise your voice an octave or two and make your “come” command sound like you are asking him to come play with you. Be sure to provide him with lots of love, pets, and praise when he complies.

Too often, when a dog doesn’t respond at first, we get a little angry and our commands start to become

very firm orders. Your stubborn little guy isn’t going to like that too much and will be less likely to listen.

Amp up the rewards and fun and do it consistently. He will slowly learn that coming to you pays great dividends. 🐾

Need Advice?

Go to DarlingDog.com/Advice to submit your questions!



MEET LEN SILVERMAN

Len Silverman has lived with animals his whole life. From a young age, there was always a cat on the prowl around the house, but he discovered his true love when his folks brought home their first dog, Poncho, who was a mess. Very lovable but completely untrained. Now with his family in Nashville, Len enjoys having a golden retriever around and finds that they are always ready to show you some love. He has discovered that when dogs understand their role in the family, everyone is a lot happier. In his spare time, Len likes to paint, but he hasn’t quite gotten the hang of animal portraits . . . not yet.

Top 10 Best Dog Breeds For Families



As a self-proclaimed dog enthusiast and part-time family cheerleader, I've embarked on a fluffy quest to uncover the best dog breeds for families. Let's face it, choosing the perfect canine companion is more complex than picking the tastiest treat from the cookie jar. It's about finding that tail-wagging, face-licking, forever-friend who fits into your family like the missing piece of a puzzle. So, grab a leash and your sense of adventure as we dive into the world of paws, snouts, and endless bouts of fetch to discover which furry friend might just become the newest member of your family.

1. LABRADOR RETRIEVER

Ah, the beloved Lab! These furry bundles of joy are like the sunshine of the dog world. Bright, warm, and capable of brightening the gloomiest of days. Known for their patience, Labs are fantastic with kids and are always ready for a game of fetch or a swim in the pond. Plus, their loyalty is the stuff of legends.



2. GOLDEN RETRIEVER

Picture a dog with a smile so big it lights up the room and fur as soft as the fluffiest pillow—that's your Golden. They're the epitome of a family dog: friendly,



intelligent, and eager to please. They'll be your kids' best friend and your most loyal companion, all rolled into one golden package.

3. BEAGLE

These little adventurers with big ears and even bigger hearts are perfect for families who love to explore. Beagles are curious, friendly, and have noses that can lead you to hidden treasures (or, more likely, to the nearest sandwich). Their compact size makes them great for both large homes and cozy apartments.

4. BULLDOG

Don't let their grumpy face fool you—bulldogs are the comedians of the dog world. They're chill, affectionate, and incredibly loyal. Bulldogs are great for families who enjoy a more laid-back lifestyle but still want a dog with a personality bigger than their snore (which is saying something).



5. BOXER

Boxers are the energetic, fun-loving clowns that never grow up. Always up for play, they're protective of their families and gentle with children. Their boundless energy and playful nature make them perfect for active families with a good sense of humor.



6. CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

These little royals bring elegance and a gentle spirit to any home. Cavaliers are adaptable, affectionate, and get along with just about everyone, making them ideal for families looking for a cuddly companion who's always ready for a lap nap or a gentle stroll.



7. POODLE

Don't let the fancy hairdo fool you. Poodles are brainy, athletic, and surprisingly down-to-earth. They come in three sizes (standard, miniature, and toy) to fit any family. Plus, they're hypoallergenic, which is perfect for families with allergy concerns. A poodle's intelligence and eagerness to learn make them a joy to train and a hit in homes that appreciate a mix of sophistication and silliness.



8. IRISH SETTER

With their stunning red coat and boundless energy, Irish Setters are like the life of the party that never ends. They're friendly, playful, and love being around people, making them perfect for active families who enjoy outdoor adventures and don't mind a bit of mischief.



9. VIZSLA

These gentle, affectionate "Velcro" dogs want nothing more than to be by your side. Vizslas are highly trainable, energetic, and great with kids, making them ideal for active families looking for a loyal companion that's always ready for the next adventure.



10. BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG

Imagine a big, fluffy teddy bear that can walk and you've got a Bernese Mountain Dog. They're strong gentle giants known for their patience and affectionate nature. Despite their size, they're great with children and protective of their families, making them perfect for those looking for a larger breed with a big heart.

And there we have it, a tail-wagging roundup of the best dog breeds for families. From the gentle giants to the petite pooches, each breed brings its own flavor of joy, companionship, and a little bit of fur-covered chaos to our lives. Remember, the perfect family dog isn't just about the breed; it's about the heart, the connection, and the love that grows between you and your four-legged friend.

So, whether you choose a playful Labrador or a cuddly Cavalier, the truth remains—your family is about to get a whole lot furrrier and infinitely more fun. Here's to barking on this wonderful journey with your new furry family member by your side. May your days be filled with snuggles, adventures, and an endless supply of dog treats! 🐾



3 Additional Family-Friendly Breeds

1. AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD

Aussies are like the multi-talented stars of the dog world: intelligent, energetic, and oh-so-trainable. They're born performers, excelling in dog sports, tricks, and any activity that lets them use their brain. Perfect for active families who want a dog that can keep up with every adventure and maybe teach the kids a thing or two about responsibility and teamwork. Just be prepared for the herding. They might try to round up the kids with the same zeal they'd use for sheep!

2. BICHON FRISE

Imagine a fluffy, walking cloud with eyes and you've got a Bichon Frise. These little bundles of joy are cheerful, adaptable, and just plain happy to be with their humans. Their hypoallergenic coat makes them a great choice for families with allergies. Plus, they're like living, breathing, bouncy balls, always ready for a game or a cuddle. Perfect for families living in smaller spaces who want a dog with a big personality and an even bigger heart.

3. SHETLAND SHEPDOG


Shelties are like the secret geniuses of the dog world. They're incredibly smart, obedient, and have a gentle disposition that makes them fantastic with kids. They're like miniature collies, complete with the stunning looks and loyal nature, but packed into a more apartment-friendly size. They love to learn and are eager to please, making them excellent companions for families interested in trying their hand at dog training or looking for a pet that's as keen on snuggles as they are on play.

DOG POV

BITCH, PLEASE

The Life Of Mae, A Boykin From Mobile

INSTALLMENT II



You find me sitting in the center of a big four-post bed. Technically, beds are off limits to me here in Mobile, but rules do not apply to me. To phrase matters differently, I do not obey rules, especially when it comes to soft surfaces. It is a good thing my human had my weave done last week, as brown fluffs would be all over his white bed cover. While I am told to restrict myself to my poofs, of which there are two in town, such is not the case up the country. I love land and sea, and by sea, I mean the Gulf Coast (bitch loves some white sand beaches), but it is the land of the Alabama Black Belt that is this swamp poodle's preferred habitat. The aforementioned access to beds is just part of the appeal. Being told to get my brown a** off my big fat human's bed now has me thinking of my family's place in the hinterlands and all of my many activities there, bed-sitting included in the mix.

Our place has been in the family since the 1820s. I am relatively new to scene. My own brevity in the scenario matters little as I think I own the place. I certainly mark my territory while there! This lady drops it like it is hot when she squats. You got that right, gentle or not so gentle reader. My first visit to the place, which my human calls CH, was on the Friday after the Sunday that he picked me up from my foster family. I was settling into my routine in town, when on Friday Eve (sounds so much better than plain old Thursday), I noticed the tubby one grabbing a duffle bag and putting clothes into it. Several nicely pressed shirts caught my eye. Then and now, I like to sit on such garments. Soft surfaces aside, that first appearance of the bag was an indicator that we would be on the road. Over six years later, I now know by the direction and duration of our time on Interstate 65 where we are going. Heading north for a short distance before exiting means that we are going to CH. I generally sleep most of the drive up. A girl has to save up her energies, you know. I have a lot to accomplish while there. To amuse me (and himself, for that matter), the tubs randomly pushes the switch for the back windshield wipers. In motion and sound, the wipers send me bat-shit crazy. We are talking raging psychopath. I think the blades are birds; all of the descendants of pterodactyls must be annihilated. Back to my account . . . On the

last stretch of road, right after we have passed over the Alabama River, I get all excited. Picture Snoopy dancing from the back to the front of a mini SUV. It is over a quarter of a mile from the front gates to the yard, so I get to channel my inner *Soul Train* moves for a bit. The theme song in my mind is "*Bitches*"!

On my first visit to CH, the reception by its owner, my grandmother, was far from welcoming. The lady, who very early on in our relation immediately came to adore my charming and cute self, was then not a fan of inside dogs. I was referred to as "that dog." I mean, as if . . . The grand told my human, who is the youngest of her litter, that I was to be relegated to the back kitchen. Again, no, ma'am . . . My, my, things have changed . . . I started the conquering of my kingdom, castle, and grandmother on that first visit. Child gates were in place to keep me in said back kitchen. I simply hopped over one of them. The feat marked the first of many successful campaigns of possession of the place. The first evening at CH was a nightmare. I do not like being alone. As much as I love punching my human's every last button, he is my favorite person. You know Boykins identify with one person. He is mine. The tub's room is in the front of the house. I could not see him from the back kitchen. I cried my eyes and lungs out on those first few visits. I was not happy like the rest of the household. My auntie was there one weekend. She was having none of my antics. Luckily, my grandmother, who had now realized how freaking amazing I am, decided that I should be allowed to stay in her bathroom.

From the grandmother's bathroom, I could see someone. I am a people dog, you know. Initially it was two people. My grandfather was living then. He was a sweet gentleman. Cancer took him from our family far too soon. He loved me sight unseen. I loved him, too. A respected lawyer and kind human being, who was quite the character, he argued before the Supreme Court, but was happiest when tending to business in the region his family has called home for two hundred years. CH had a special place in his affections. When in the country, his uniform was an all-khaki one (the thought of which still causes my human to adopt his sartorial judgement look) and the shirtings had not one but two breast pockets. Treats for dogs were kept therein. My human had me on a strict dog food diet at the time. I outwitted him in that department. My grandfather aided my efforts. He promised his "boy," the tubby one, that he would not feed me treats. Like that ever happened!

"I started the conquering of my kingdom, castle, and grandmother on that first visit. Child gates were in place to keep me in said back kitchen. I simply hopped over one of them. The feat marked the first of many successful campaigns of possession of the place. The first evening at CH was a nightmare. I do not like being alone."

After my grandfather passed away, I moved from the bathroom into my grandmother's room. I now sleep in the bed with her. I have my own blankets even! She should have my monogram on them. A coronet would be nice, too, now that I think about it. Bed—check. My next step is taking title to the whole of the place!!

Soft surfaces, of which there are an abundance as CH has five bedrooms, are only a part of the appeal of the place. For my ever so marvelous self, it is the grounds that make the place so special. A fifty-acre pasture surrounds the big yard and orchard behind it. Woods surround the pasture. Once very park-like, the pasture is now home to a herd of large dog-like creatures named cattle. My human calls them beefsteaks and veal. I like to bark at them and try to herd them in random directions. They pay no attention to me whatsoever. The donkey who guards them from wild dogs, boars, and coyotes judges me, though. She is a rival to my attentions from my grandmother, so I hate that bitch. Does not she know that I am the bitch of the place?!

The cattle are nice and all. It is their calling cards that I find most appealing, though. Meadow muffins make for excellent fun. I like to pounce on them and roll to my heart's content in the resulting sh*t show. The fresher the pile, the more I like it. The pasture functions as one big gym and spa for me. I run from dropping to

dropping. Run, roll, repeat, for hours on end. I have a lot of time to run, which is nice. During the warmer months, which is most of the year in Alabama, my human is behind or atop a lawnmower or carrying weed eater. My sh*t-covered self checks on him regularly between my rounds of rolling in cattle dung. Several springs and two creeks are fun to dive into when I need a rinse. There is an old brick pond, too. It takes its name from its origin. The clay that made the bricks for the foundation and chimneys of the house and oldest outbuildings was dug there, thus the cavity that is the pond. It is nice and muddy, just like I like it!

There are always people coming and going at CH. I relish in the activity, and the attention. For some reason, no one wants to pet, hug, or pick me up when I am covered in bovine droppings. I wonder why? Most of the family and all guests like to gather on the big front porch. It extends the length of the façade. The views from the porch are amazing. A big old swing and lots of old rocking chairs provide seating for humans. I like to patrol the porch. When people start drinking Bloody Marys during the late morning hours and cocktails during the magic hours, I often snag cheese straws and other delicacies. Taxes, taxes.

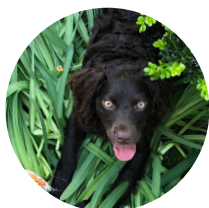
I am a foodie. One of my predecessors in the canine family tree was described as "an appetite with fur." Yours truly does not let traditions fall to the wayside in the culinary department. From hot dogs that have been tossed aside for a few days after Mardi Gras parades to cheesy and noodly casseroles atop kitchen counters, I like to eat and go to great lengths to obtain foods that are said to be off limits to me. One of my greatest triumphs in that respect transpired at CH. My human and grandmother were hosting friends one evening several years ago. The chubs grilled two beef tenderloins for the occasion. With twice-baked potatoes, a salad, and rolls, the tenderloin was placed on the breakfast room table and served buffet style. My family and our guests did the polite first serve and ventured into the big dining room to eat dinner. After following the party into the dining room, I made a discreet exit. At first, no one noticed my Irish adieu. Once the absence of my ever-delightful company was perceived, my human and grandmother went off in pursuit of me. They found me sitting in one of the Windsor chairs in the breakfast room. With one paw on the table, I was posed like the dude in the Dos Equis commercials. Instead of having consumed a beer, I had taken down almost a whole tenderloin. A good Bordeaux or a Spanish red would have paired nicely with that meat. There were

many recriminations inflicted upon me that were delivered by way of words uttered to my face and pops blown to my wiggly caboose. I regretted nothing, absolutely nothing, though. Actually, I am miffed that I did not get any of those twice-baked potatoes!

With family time, recreational pursuits, and fine dining, I love my visits to the Black Belt. The baths for reason of the rolling in cow dung are not to my liking, but worth the irritation, though. Even in baths, I can put my human in his place. Swatting his face and privates affords me great pleasure. A lady such as I has to get her kicks when she can! Speaking of kicks, dear reader, your next installment will take the form an account of my walks through historic Mobile. Think towering Live Oaks, shaming of the human, and ME!

As always, Bitch Please. 🐾

Maesel the Boykin



MEET CART BLACKWELL

Cartledge Weeden Blackwell III, "Cart," is a historian and a curator. Blackwell was born in Selma, Alabama. He obtained an undergraduate degree from the College of Charleston and his graduate degree from the University of Virginia. He authored *Of People and Of Place: Portraiture in Alabama (1870-1945): Reconstruction to Modernism* for the Alabama Chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA). His second book, *Of Color and Light: The Life and Art of Artist-Designer Clara Weaver Parrish*, is to be published by the University of Alabama Press in the winter of 2025.

Blackwell has penned scores of articles for magazines and numerous essays for exhibit catalogues. An eighth-generation Alabamian, Cart loves his native state.

When not found on his family's farm in Wilcox County, he is on the Gulf Coast. Regardless of where he finds himself, Mae, his crafty spaniel, is always by his side!



Sam's Obituary

Sam. You were just too dang smart. So smart that you drove yourself mad. I have never known another like you. I have known plenty of labs that were gun shy. I have known plenty more that didn't like bad weather . . . especially booming thunder. Never have I known a dog of any breed that has climbed an eight-foot tall oak wall and traveled 5 miles in a thunderstorm to a place that he had visited only once. Not to mention scratching on the right door of the apartment building that you had only seen from the back of a truck. Nor have I known or even heard of another pup that climbed a chain-link fence on the Gulf Coast and got picked up 40 miles from home after traveling 150 miles north on I-65 a week later. That same fence got you in the end. Despite your mania, you were always such a sweet boy. It is hard to believe you have been gone over 20 years. We still miss you. 🐾

Want To Submit An Obituary?
[DarlingDog.com/Obituary](https://darlingdog.com/obituary)

MY DOG IS MY CO-PILOT

A Visit To The Vet



With the car window rolled down and her locks flowing in the breeze, Winnie Lew had her best “notice me” look on her face. We slowed at the light, and when the car turned left instead of going straight, she tucked her head in the window and cut her eyes at me. “We are not going to work at the church,” I read in her eyes. “We are going to that other place. The place that smells of fear.” Unfortunately, Winnie Lew was correct. The car was headed in the direction of her vet.

It was time for Winnie Lew’s annual visit to the vet. Poking and prodding were on the agenda, and she knew it. Panting commenced and fur was flying off her in cyclone fashion. We pulled into the unusually full parking lot, and by the time we got out of the car and inside the office, my black clergy shirt was covered in her blond fur. When we walked inside, the staff took a moment and greeted “one of their favorites,” but that didn’t seem to make any difference to Winnie Lew. Because of a few emergencies, the receptionist informed us they were running

behind. Resigned to her fate, Winnie Lew dutifully sat in my lap and awaited her annual destiny.

I’d taken off work a little early, and as a priest, I was still in my clericals—a black shirt, now covered in fur, and starched white collar. The collar, like a beacon, is the first thing anyone notices about me. Wearing a collar can be a gift as people feel free to talk to you about just about anything. Winnie Lew in her collar is merely an extension of me. But because of that, with boundaries lowered, interactions can get interesting at times.

As soon as we took our place in an empty blue plastic chair, the cat next to us started howling loudly in its carrier, reaching its paws through the opening as if to say, “Save me, I’ve been kidnapped.” Winnie Lew’s ears perked up. Before I could form words, the cat’s Tammy Faye Baker look-alike owner winked at me and Winnie Lew and said, “She’s fine. She just hates the carrier.” I smiled and told her I probably wouldn’t like a carrier either and asked the cat’s name. She told me it was Dolly, after Dolly Parton. It had been her son’s cat. Tears welled up in her eyes as she told me that her son had lived in New York. She inherited Dolly when he had died ten years before from complications from

“That afternoon, it seemed, we were destined to be the pastoral care chaplains for the vet’s office.”

AIDS. Dolly, once his pride and joy, was now hers and was a constant happy reminder of her son. Before she could continue the saga, Dolly’s name was called and up they stood. She smiled and said, “Enjoyed chatting with you.” It was at that point that I realized that even though I had left work, my assistant and I were still on the job. That afternoon, it seemed, we were destined to be the pastoral care chaplains for the vet’s office.

Our next encounter was with a very sweet, large, black pit bull mix and its owner. The owner, a thin, muscular, tattooed young man said his name was Davion but everyone called him Dream, so I should to. Still sitting in my lap, Winnie Lew tilted her head toward the dog with a concerned look her in eye and seemed to ask, “Why are you here?” The dog wandered over and placed its lunchbox-shaped head next to me like she was trying to tell me something. Noticing my collar, Dream softened and said, “Sister, Queenie here could sure use a blessing. She had a tumor removed six months ago, and this is her final check-up. She’s my best friend, and Dr. West thinks he got everything. I sure hope so.” I placed my hand on Queenie’s head, Winnie Lew leaned in, and I said a quick blessing for both Dream and Queenie. Best friends are important. Dream and Queenie then moved down a couple of seats over from us as they awaited their hopefully good news.

As this was happening, an older couple came out. Country would be about the only way to describe them. Both were visibly distraught. The woman was holding a little handful of a dog that sported a pink bow on its head. The man was holding a bundle about that same size covered by what appeared to be a well-loved blanket. Now, sobbing, he hurriedly went out to the parking lot while his wife settled at the counter. Having been in that same place, I knew what had happened and my heart went out to them. She noticed me in my collar, made a beeline for me, and asked what kind of dog Winnie Lew was and could she pet her. Through tears, she told me the story of Mickey and Minnie, their beloved Yorkies. They were siblings, and her husband had gotten them for her fourteen years earlier when their youngest moved away because he said, “The house was too quiet.” She told me Mickey had kidney failure, and today, they had made the decision to let Mickey go and free him from his suffering. By now the staff was crying, Dream was crying, and I choked up trying to think of something appropriate to say. Winnie Lew was the only steady one in the bunch. She jumped off my lap and look straight up at me as if to say, “Do something.” The woman looked at me and asked if I would come out to their truck and say

prayer over Mickey. I held her free hand and walked outside, where her husband sat in the truck with the door open holding on to Mickey. His wife said, “Honey, we need to pray, and I’ve asked this pastor if she would offer some words.” Winnie Lew stood next to me, and I offered what comfort I could, and then we all said “Amen.” I heard an extra “Amen” followed by “Thank you, Pastor” as we walked back inside.

Once back in our blue chair, I reflected on how animals have a way of touching our deepest emotions and connecting us to one another. Their very presence makes us all be a little more present for each other. At that moment, I was thankful that Winnie Lew and I both wore collars because being present as chaplains was our calling that day. Just as Winnie Lew’s name was called, a frazzled-looking woman burst through the door, clutching a wriggling black-and-white kitten with odd pink splotches all over its face and paws. “Please, can someone help? Miss Terry got into my makeup bag, and I think she ate some lipstick! My daughter’s going to kill me if she is sick.”

The receptionist assured her that Miss Terry would be fine—she might need a bath, and the litter box could get interesting, but all would be fine. Winnie Lew’s ears perked up again, her eyes following the commotion. I could almost hear her thinking as she looked up at me, “Humans sure are needy creatures. Glad I was here for them today.” I looked at her and said, “Amen, Pastor. Amen.” 🙏



MEET AMY GEORGE

Amy George is an Episcopal priest in Selma, Alabama, where she shares an office with her volunteer pastoral care assistant, Winnie Lew. When not doing God’s work, you can find Amy doing Dog’s work—vacuuming a never ending supply of dog hair, chauffeuring Winnie Lew, and being the provider of endless dog treats. Amy feels blessed to have no fear of ever being attacked by squirrels, UPS delivery people, or small lizards.



MONSTER DOGS

I have always wanted a big dog. Not just a big dog—a monster dog. I toyed with the idea of getting a St. Bernard so much so that I had found a breeder in west Georgia not too far from my home and had spoken with them about their next litter. These had a champion bloodline and cost more than a moderately equipped Subaru. I spoke with a friend who had lived with someone who had one. He said they are great dogs but can become quite malodorous if not bathed regularly. I may or may not be a little lazy, depending on whom you may ask, and I may lack in the dog bathing area from time to time. Since I had a lot on my plate with two kids and a restaurant that I may or may not know how to run, I decided to go a different route.

I am a Facebook fanatic and crave new information all the time. It may be about what you had for dinner or who you're going to vote for. One day during my morning constitutional, I noticed an old friend had some new puppies. I had been her teacher's aide in high school, and we had become good friends. She bred Great Danes and Labradoodles. She had a new litter, and I was in "get a dog" mode after the recent passing of my beloved Annie Dog. I grabbed my kids from their mom's house, and we headed off to Marion Junction, Alabama (try and find that on a map).

Upon arrival, I spotted six little tumble-turds that melted mine and my daughters' hearts. I saw a male gray spotted merle. My daughters had each picked out two different ones. I sold them on the gray one

and we went home. Before the time came to pick him up, we argued about the name constantly. They had picked Tank and Moose. Both cute names for a Dane, but there was only one name that would do. I have at times been known as a ridiculous person. I have always been a big fan of the *Andy Griffith Show*. We went to pick him up a week or so later and took him to the vet. I took great pride in announcing the name was Otis Campbell Woodson. And it works. He is such an Otis.

As he has grown, I have learned some of the eccentricities and anomalies of Great Danes. They are so long, their stomachs can twist. They usually hate to swim. My breeder saw that I had purchased a raised bowl stand for his food and water. I thought she was gonna give me a whippin'. I put those bowls on the ground quick, fast, and in a hurry. I also discovered that I had bought a Monster Dog. This thing just kept on and kept on growing. I am 6'2" and his head comes up to my belly button.

He is not a dumb dog by any means, but he plays the part so well. He has given me reason to call him "Big Stupid" at times. Occasionally, he will turn quickly to check out a noise and slam his head into a wall, leaving me with less worry for him and more for the structural stability of my home. I have a small black lab that has watched him grow from a pup. She cared for him like her own, but now he steps on her face and she isn't really fond of him anymore. I can't really blame her. Occasionally, when on a walk or playing in the yard, I hear "Shooooop that's a big dog!!!" and people are genuinely afraid of him. If he actually got to you, he might lick you to death. But I'm not telling.

I understand that Danes have a considerably short life span. I'll take what I can get. As I type this, he is literally laying across my couch, and a full two feet of him is hanging off. My kids do cuddle with him and call him Otey-Bear. They do get in your heart, don't they? 🐾



MEET MARK WOODSON

Born in Selma, AL in 1973, Mark is the owner of a local restaurant living alone with a Lab/Catahoula mix named Lucy, a Great Dane named Otis, and 3 cats...Sam, Charlie, and Eddie B. He claims to hunt and fish as his hobby, but he mostly scrolls through reels on his phone and binge drinks in his free time. His favorite pastime is developing disorders his physicians have to Google. He has 2 daughters, Bonnie and Molly, who enjoy volleyball and spending their inheritance early.



Dogs Around The World

RECENT HEARTWARMING AND INTRIGUING DOG STORIES FROM ALL OVER:

1. THE FASCINATION OF DOGS WITH THE LAMB CHOP TOY

An exploration into why dogs are enamored with the Lamb Chop plush toy, delving into its design, texture, and the emotional connection it fosters between pets and their owners.

theatlantic.com/family/archive/2024/11/dog-lamb-chop-toy-obsession/680691

2. TODDLER AND FAMILY DOG'S SPA DAY GOES VIRAL

A video capturing a toddler giving her Weimaraner, Frank, a spa day with a toy makeup kit has garnered over a million views, highlighting the special bond between the child and her dog.

people.com/dog-and-toddler-enjoy-spa-days-and-cuddles-go-viral-for-special-bond-exclusive-8745012

3. GOLDEN RETRIEVER APPOINTED "DIRECTOR OF PAWSITIVITY" AT UNIVERSITY

Charley, a 2-year-old Golden Retriever, has been named the "Director of Pawsitivity" for Montclair State University's women's basketball team, bringing joy and positive energy to the players.

people.com/golden-retriever-charley-director-of-pawsitivity-montclair-state-university-basketball-team-8747651

4. SERVICE DOGS AID VETERANS IN OVERCOMING PTSD

Military veterans share how service dogs have been instrumental in their recovery from PTSD, providing emotional support and assistance in daily activities.

nypost.com/2024/11/12/us-news/military-veterans-with-ptsd-saved-by-service-dogs

5. DOG THEFT IN DERBYSHIRE CAUGHT ON CAMERA

A family's cockapoo, Alan, was stolen from their driveway in broad daylight, with the incident captured on a doorbell camera, prompting a police investigation.

thesun.ie/news/14195300/moment-dognapper-swipes-cockapoo/

Say TREATS!

Hey Paw-Tographers!



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