

PIPER THE HIKER

He barks and dances when I take
my nylon knapsack out.
No fooling him, he's wide awake,
and knows what it's about.

We'll put his hiking collar on,
then pack his 6 foot lead,
granola bars we'll snack upon,
and canteens that we'll need.

He speaks to get me hurried up
as early as we may;
I put in his Sierra cup
and then we're on our way.

He settles down to nap a bit
while driving to the start,
but by the time we get to it
he's ready to depart.

He's well-equipped to hike the trails—
full 20 pounds and tough
with muscled body, well-worn nails,
and pads of leather stuff.

He also knows each voice command
where "wait" means stop in place,
"on-trail"—don't wander on the land,
and "close" means match my pace.

He slogs straight through the marshy bogs
and wades the water holes.
He crosses creeks on rocks and logs
or balanced on slim poles.

He's rather trace a wild scent
than sit my photo pose,
so shoot and move and he's content
just following his nose.

He's agile on the talus slopes,
sure-footed on the scree.
Up on the tundra, easy lopes
keep him alongside me.

He's quick to follow any trail,
regardless of the heights,
and never thinks of turning tail
where drop-offs give me frights.

He isn't perfect, sometimes slips
and stumbles like I do,
but terrier proud at times he trips,
pretends to note the view.

Somehow he takes it all in stride,
no matters where we go—
as much at ease on the Divide
as anywhere I know.

by Lee Netzler