

OH HOW MY PIPER PLAYED



LEE NETZLER

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The motivation to write this book came from several people who positively influenced my life in one way or another, including having responsibility for bringing Piper and me together. Although many more deserve to be mentioned here, I am pleased at least to have this opportunity to say "Thank you" to these few:

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To Kathy Connolly, who heard me speak so well of the breed that she surprised me with an 8 week old Christmas gift—Piper—and who later, because of him, acquired two Scottish Terriers of her own.

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This book is for Piper



JO-DENS HIGHLAND PIPER, C.D.

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**"There isn't anything much better
that could happen to a person in life
than sharing company with a good dog."**

—Lee Metzler

THE SECOND ACT

**Mud puddles are the best of fun,
but afterward there's just one rub:
the clean-up act when play is done
is titled, "Puppy Meets The Tub."**

Alas!

**At last I was resigned
to face a fierce young Scottie's wrath;
instead I was surprised to find
my puppy loves to take a bath.**

BROTHER'S KEEPERS

**Who draws his water, makes his meals,
and takes him out for walks?
Who brushes him and plays with him?
Who listens when he talks?**

**Who trims his nails and cuts his hair;
who takes him to the Vet?
And who makes sure he gets his bath
in case he should forget?**

**It seems I take good care of him
as far as folks can see.
But why I gladly do all this,
nobody questions me.**

**Whose cool wet nose comes nuzzling
to smile-start my day?
When it comes time to leave for work,
who wags me on my way?**

And who barks me back home again
when my work day is done?
Who takes my troubles off my mind
and makes me Number One?

If I should scold or bawl him out,
who doesn't hold a grudge?
Who always loves me as I am
and never stops to judge?

It looks like I take care of him
as far as folks can see.
In fact, the opposite is true
and he takes care of me.

NEW TRICKS

He's 2 years old and a terrier—
is that too old to be trained?
You shouldn't be such a worrier,
for there always is much to be gained.

I know a dog who is 9 or 10
who paid no attention at all.
He went to school and ever since then
he comes whenever you call.

In addition I know a very old bitch
who doggedly did her own thing.
You'd be amazed at the positive switch
after one or two lessons this spring.

Take heart for you aren't in a terrible fix
and it's easier done than explained.
You really can teach an old dog new tricks,
and there always is much to be gained.

MAIL ORDER BONUS

Heather, Teddy and Elizabeth
are 3 new friends I've found.
We made acquaintance, visited,
and never spoke a sound.

They never left a muddy print
or shed a single hair
and I've enjoyed their merriment
right from my easy chair.

You wonder, I suppose, how does
such friendliness extend—
the simple answer is because
each is my pen pal friend.

PIPER, PHEASANT AND ME

Sometimes we just don't give them enough credit. I learned that lesson from Piper, my Scottish Terrier, when he was only a pup. At that time, I was part-owner of a small ranch. The property contained a pond surrounded by several acres of well-drained cattails. The dense thickets provided the perfect habitat for squadrons of pheasants.

We discovered the pheasants by accident one day while we were out taking a walk. Piper got curious about an unfamiliar scent, followed it, and to our surprise, flushed a pheasant from its hiding place. He was so thoroughly pleased with his exciting results that he quickly went back to work trying to find another scent.

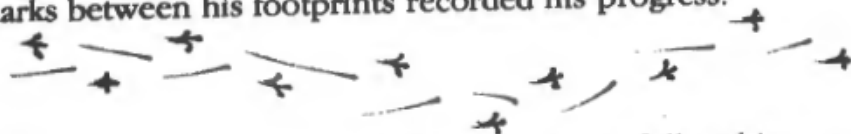
Even though my previous hunting experience was limited to stalking squirrels 30 years earlier, I promptly went out and bought a new 12 gauge shotgun. I knew we were on to something special, and even fancied myself as the owner of the world's only Scottie Bird Dog!

But, it was already deep autumn and we had gotten a very late start on the hunting season. Even so, we were determined to make the most of our time. We tramped the marsh as often as we could during the last few days of the season, bagging two pheasants before it ended.

After the season was over, we continued our tracking training. As winter set in, the fresh snowfalls allowed me to see the tracks and to follow them as Piper sniffed his way along. He was getting more and more successful at following the tracks and flushing the birds, but I began to have some doubts about his ability. I wondered—was he still

following the scent, or was he using his eyes to follow the tracks through the snow, just as I was doing?

One clear morning, after a fresh snowfall, we set out again along the familiar narrow paths through the reeds. We soon picked up the trail of a big rooster whose long tail marks between his footprints recorded his progress:



Piper moved confidently along, appearing to follow his nose, solidly fixed on the rooster's tracks. But, he could be sight-tracking, I thought. With that in mind, I began to tease him—"Can you see well enough?" and "Would you like my glasses?" He ignored me, keeping to his business. And then he suddenly stopped. He lifted his nose high in the air, sniffing carefully in all directions. As I silently watched, he turned and stepped resolutely off the narrow path. And as I stood motionless, he struggled with great difficulty through 30 feet of nearly impenetrable cattails.

I will never forget the sudden explosion of flying snow and pieces of debris, the squawking, the barking, and the powerful thrashing of strong wings as the big rooster burst upward and free.

When the commotion died down, I followed the prints that we had been tracking from the point where Piper left the trail. They led me in a large half circle, ending at the spot where he flushed the big rooster.

Never again would I doubt his ability to track a scent.

A FEW MORE WORDS ABOUT THE SCOTTIE BIRD DOG

Piper and I successfully hunted pheasants together for a couple of seasons. Then, due to changing circumstances, I had to give up the activity for several years.

He didn't forget his training and his instincts, however, and he demonstrated that several times for me over the next few summers. We hiked a lot then, and I always demanded strict manners from him whenever we were out on the trail. He was trained, for example, never to leave the trail without my permission, but there were times when something special off the trail would interest him. A fresh deer scent crossing the trail was one of those events. Upon encountering one, he would prance back and forth at the spot, which I could often verify by the fresh tracks, dancing on the trail and barking, begging to be released from my "on the trail" restriction. Sometimes, after making certain that there were no deer nearby, I would give him an "OK," and let him follow his nose for 40 or 50 yards to satisfy his curiosity and his urge to track. Then I would recall him and we would be on our way again. He enjoyed the chance to follow his nose for those few minutes, and when called, he always returned enthusiastically and honored my "on the trail" restriction as we continued hiking.

While hiking the first summer after we had quit pheasant hunting, I was mystified when Piper suddenly stopped in a high country meadow, and then agitated and barked at me to be allowed to leave the trail. There were no trees around, and only a few clumps of bushes scattered in the short grass. It was not likely there were any deer in the area, but he insisted that he wanted to follow a scent.

Not observing any danger, I gave him the "OK," and quietly watched as he immediately went to work.

He zealously followed his nose, pursuing an erratic track for about 60 yards through the short grass. Then he slowed at a spot not far from where I was standing. The next thing I saw was a flurry of wings as a large bluish gray bird erupted and accelerated rapidly away. In a few minutes he flushed another. Satisfied, he returned triumphantly to the trail where I stood in amazement, trying to comprehend what I had just witnessed.

Later, after consulting several bird identification books and discussing it with my sister, who is a birder, we determined that Piper had flushed Blue Grouse—which are also upland birds—"cousins," so to speak, of pheasants. If I had not already been convinced of his bird dog abilities, this time he certainly left no doubt.

Without encouragement, he repeated his same performance on our hikes a few times each summer over the next 3 years. That apparently satisfied his interest, because after that he never bothered with tracking Blue Grouse.

In his final three autumns, we took up pheasant hunting again. The last year, we hunted what I knew was barren territory, but I went anyway, just so that we could be companions, walking the fields and enjoying the sunny fall days together. We hunted 6 times, never getting anything, but by then, unconcerned whether we did or not. I wondered if his nose still worked. On our next to last time in the field, he suddenly raced ahead. He pursued for 100 yards to the end of the field where a hen pheasant finally gave up and took flight. The old boy still had it in him.

THE MOUSER

When first he scents the runts,
 he growls,
and to protect his house,
 he prowls,
then when he sees their stunts,
 he howls.

He knows what's worse than mouse
 is mice,
and what's much worse than once—
 is twice.

FORTY-SOMETHING AND 3

A cold nose nudge against my ear
and sloppy kisses on my cheek
awake and make me take a peek
to see my Scottish Terrier's here.

He teases—we play hide and seek.
I'm just a kid and he's a pup
these mornings on the bed with me.

I'm forty-something; he'll be 3.

We hope we never do grow up.

PRIORITY MALE

He sits on the passenger's side
where he rarely makes a noise.
We ride, and he watches outside,
maintaining his Scottish poise.

He parks at the front yard gate
observing the traffic pass,
and barks when appropriate—
while lending his touch of class.

He may or he may not speak
depending upon his stand,
but based on his terrier cheek,
he's the Canine-In-Command.

TWO BASIC RULES

Those terriers have got it made.
They always know right where they stand.
They never act as if afraid
and quite ignore a guiding hand.

And yet, aloof as they may be,
they're down-to-earth reality.

Now here's how they know where they're at—
they use two rules with folks they meet:

Each friendly hand contains a pat,
and every pocket holds a treat.

WEE SCOTS COLLECTORS SHOW
(June 8-9, 1985)

There's a Scottie collectors' show;
it's the first since Wee Scots began.
You'll be doggone well pleased to go
to this gathering of the clan.

It's a very important date,
so go visiting if you can.
Mark your calendar—don't be late
to the gathering of the clan.

Hurry up—do not hesitate,
for there's something for every fan
and Hie! Hie! to the Hoosier State
for the gathering of the clan.

$$2 = 3 \times 1$$

No pup in your play
and not having much 4-legged fun?
Well, all I can say
is that having one beats having none.

A pup for a pet
would soon have you enjoying the fun.
In fact, better yet,
why not think about more than just one?

You'd find that a pair
really doubles your 4-footed fun.
It's true, but beware—
2 R 3 X as much work as 1.

PIPER, LOG AND ME

Piper, my Scottish Terrier, learned about hiking early in his life. He loved the outdoors, and so as soon as he demonstrated good responses to basic obedience commands, we began to explore the beginners' mountain trails.

As we hiked, my frequent comments furnished a steady supply of comforting or cautionary reminders of what constituted proper trail behavior. With practice, he mastered the fundamentals and before long his short lead became a long lead, and then no lead at all. He became a welcome and pleasant hiking companion, overflowing with enthusiasm. And he was ready for tougher trails.

In the high country, most mountain trails cross streams of various sizes. In the more primitive areas, the larger streams are often spanned by a log laid across the water. These allow a hiker to reach the distant shore by walking over the makeshift log "bridge." At first, it is unnerving to balance and walk the log, suspended above the fast moving water. But, with practice, it becomes easier.

Since our future travels would involve crossing many streams, Piper needed to learn how to walk the logs. So, we began his training. We started by walking together atop the smooth trunks of every large downed tree we happened to find along the trail. Initially he was hesitant, but we made it a game, and before long he was eager to leave the trail, to walk either ahead of me or behind me, atop any log along our way. Next we started walking atop large logs over little streams. We gradually progressed to bigger streams and smaller logs. Finally, he became confident enough to walk nearly any log across nearly any stream,

although I was always careful not to let him attempt a crossing which might prove dangerous.

I was so proud of his ability that I decided to photograph him in action. And, I knew the perfect place to take the picture—the stream at Lion Gulch trail.

It was a very cold February day when we got there, and I was pleased that the fresh snow would accentuate his black coat. Upon reaching the stream I planned to cross the log, set up the camera, and then call Piper to come across to me. I would photograph him in mid-crossing, framed between the frozen banks, high above the rushing icy water.

As planned, I crossed the log with the camera. But, when I turned around, I was surprised to find that he had also come across right on my heels. Well, we could fix that. I would simply command him to "stay" on this side of the stream. Then I would cross it again, call him from the other side, and take the picture from over there.

So, I re-crossed the log, got the camera ready, and then called Piper to come. He trotted out with confidence. Unfortunately, neither of us realized that my footsteps from the previous two crossings had transformed the fresh snow on the log into an icy coating. At just about the middle, he slipped and plunged 6 feet into the frigid stream below!

I quickly scrambled down, pulled him out, wrapped his shivering body in my coat, and rushed him to the car.

That incident never bothered him later. He remained fearless and he always loved walking the logs.

A MATTER OF THE HEARTH

To satisfy his canine whim
I'm tasked to keep an honored space
reserved in front of the fireplace,
which he's convinced is lit for him.

WEARIN' O' THE GREEN*

* "At...Obedience Trials the following colors shall be used for prize ribbons

Qualifying Prize . . . Dark Green"

(AKC Obedience Regulations, Chap. 1, Sec. 18.)

Have you never seen an Obedience Trial?

What a treat you have in store
watching dog and master exhibit their style
toward a qualifying score.

Each pair of performers tries to repeat
their perfectly practiced routine
and half a dozen synchronized feet
go marching toward the green.

Sure and it is a lovely sight,
none finer may be seen
when a couple of friends have earned the right
to the Wearin' O' the Green.

THE NAIL TRIM

(for Kay)

When doing grooming
 nothing ever fails
except my coarse attempts
 to clip her nails.
She sits with patience
 in the barber's chair,
cooperating fully
 as I scissors hair.

She stands, and never
 makes the least to-do,
enduring soaps and rinses
 and shampoo,
and afterward,
 she acts so dignified
with seeming unconcern
 while she's blow-dried.

MARY HAD A LITTLE SCOT
(for "The Highlanders")

Mary had a little Scot
whose coat was kettle black,
and everywhere that Mary went
he forged or else lagged back.

She took him off to school one day
to teach him what she could,
and now wherever Mary goes
he heels the way he should.

NO TRESPASSERS

We were welcome before
at the old barber shop,
and the grocery store
and the neighborhood bar,
but we're not anymore—
that has come to a stop.

Now the way that things are,
without raising a voice,
new signs shout out loud
saying, "NO DOGS ALLOWED."

Well, one thing they should know
is we still have our pride
and when given a choice
we will always decide
for ourselves not to go
where a friend cannot go.

ELECTRIC PERFORMANCE

**In rarer instances
occurs a wondrous thing
when one exhibitor
electrifies a ring.**

**As handler works the lead
high voltage currents arc
transforming man and beast
from energy to spark.**

**The human or the dog,
who generates the force?
And which end of the line
supplies the power source?**

**When two are so well fused
and turned on to succeed,
no matter if their charge
flows up or down the lead.**

MY DOG'S CUP

Hurrah for his Sierra cup
which travels with us everywhere.
When something needs to be lapped up,
there's no container to compare.

On arid hikes when moisture's found
it's used to scrape a water hole;
as liquid fills the hollowed ground
his cup becomes his dinner bowl.

Out biking, when we're far away
and desperate to quench our thirst,
if we should find some lemonade,
well-mannered, he lets me drink first.

And when, upon a summer's day,
we finish work and get our pay,
the stricter of us does admit
it's fair we share a common treat—
and his cup helps him beat the heat:
One scoop of ice cream—perfect fit.

PIPER THE HIKER

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

**We 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, walk-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'd 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,
now matter where we go—
as much at ease on The Divide
as anywhere I know.

PIPER AND LEE



ON THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT AUDUBON

THE SCARIEST HIKE

Piper, my Scottish Terrier, was an experienced hiker by the time we decided to trek to Upper Coney Lake in the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area of the Arapahoe National Forest. We knew it would be a long day, since the trail began at about 9,000 feet and then climbed another 1,800 feet over the 6 mile one-way distance to the lake.

The first 3 miles of the hike were relatively easy and followed an old Jeep road to Coney Flats. At that point the trail steepened and the next 2 miles to Lower Coney Lake were somewhat harder going. With increasing effort we finally persisted and paused at the lake to rest.

By this time much of the terrain was becoming covered by very thick growths of *krummbolz*, which are dense stunted deformed evergreens commonly found near treeline. Passage through them was difficult and slow. As was my custom, Piper was required to make his own way without my assistance. Unfortunately on this day, as we struggled along through the generally pathless tangle of *krummbolz* branches, he scratched an eye—which I found out later became a lifelong weeping reminder of the hike.

As we began the final mile to Upper Coney Lake any hint of a trail disappeared and it was extremely difficult going. We pressed on through the nearly impassible jumble of branches, avoiding several swampy areas and rock outcroppings as we made our way. Our progress was slow, and the detours slowed us even further.

After an hour, we finally reached the lake. We rested, nestled against the almost vertical mountainside, at

10,800 feet, about 1,500 feet below the Continental Divide.

Without warning, huge black clouds spilled over the ridge high above us and a thunderstorm swept into our valley. We were well above treeline and the nearby flashes of lightning were fierce and frightening. Trapped in a rock bowl, we could feel every deafening crash of thunder.

Fearing for our lives, we scrambled to get back down out of the storm to some protection. In order to avoid the worst of the *krummbolz*, we retreated by leap-frogging atop the huge slab rocks of the talus slope lining the side of the valley. Hammered by repeated thunder and lightning, and with heavy rain pelting us, we hopped from rock to slippery rock as fast as we could go. I fell once, skinning my forearm badly and breaking my wrist watch, but even that only slowed me for a few moments. Piper did his best to keep up. I kept track of him by the jingling of his collar tags behind me. Suddenly, I couldn't hear him any more.

I turned around, and he was nowhere in sight. Frantic that something had happened to him, I struggled back uphill, calling his name—"Piper!" "Piper!" "Piper!"

Finally I found him, flat on his tummy, stretched out on a tilted slab too steep and slippery for him to negotiate. He had slid backwards—forelegs stiff and chest pressed hard against the tilted rock. He stopped sliding when his rump lodged against another slab behind him, with his hind legs dangling down into a deep crevice between them. Every muscle was taut and his eyes were the size of silver dollars.

I picked him up and we just hugged each other for a long, long time in the cold rain. Then we hiked home together.

THE COOK'S LAMENT

While waiting feeding patiently
he'll sometimes glance askance at me.
I know he wonders secretly,
"Tonight what will our supper be?"

No one explained his hungry look
came with the job of being cook.

THE VISITOR

An old male Collie visited today.
He stiffly crossed from half a block away.
As he approached, I watched with some suspense
the Scottie poised along the chain link fence—

waiting.

No need to worry for that pair.
Old gentlemen know how to be polite
and young dogs find that rather than a fight
one might just meet a new friend over there—

waiting.

Each marked on his side of the line
and then inspected where the other signed,
respecting limits both were quick to learn.

When satisfied the visit turned out fine,
the Collie left while Scottie stayed behind,
impatient for a new friend to return—

waiting.

OBEDIENCE EXERCISES

He cocks his head when I call, "Come,"
but keeps his after-half in place.
He'd better speed a quicker pace
so what I see is where he's from
or he'll discover I'm not dumb,
and find he's found a stricter race.

He's super-slow when I say, "Sit,"
and I shall not put up with it.
He's better drop his bottom half
or he will get the worst of it,
and learn, much to his benefit,
that I will have the final laugh.

He's insecure when I pray, "Stay,"
and tends to try to slip away.
He'd better heed the things I say
and never move a single paw
or he will pay for foolish play,
and finally learn my word is law.

He's confident when I say, "Treat,"
and comes at once on speedy feet.
He's best performing this command
while taking orders from my hand.
I hope you fully understand
it's not the standard that I'd planned
which one day he would have to meet—
but he knows every word for "Eat."

A BEDTIME STORY

Immovable canine
asleep on my bed,
why is it my pillow
is under your head?

The night's getting chilly,
a quilt would feel fine,
but why, may I ask,
are you curled up on mine?

The cover won't cover
my toes to my head,
and why am I lying here
crossways in bed?

Cold nose and cold toes
I tug at the sheet
while friend snores contented,
warm fur and warm feet.

THE PILL

With remedy in fingertips
I try to pry his puckered lips,
to open mouth and thus drop in
one tablet of the medicine.

Not fun!

"Persistence" is my middle name—
I vowed that two could play this game,
but now, what middle name is his?
"Old Stubborn" must be what it is.

That's it!

Through all my strength his jaws were sprung
and carefully upon his tongue
I placed the pill, then sealed his lip.
He swallowed; I released my grip.

Well done!

But when at last I thought I'd won
I found, in fact, I'd just begun,
outwitted by his mouthing skill,
as grinning, he lipped out the pill.

Oh spit!

DOG CLUB BUSINESS AS USUAL

The meeting starts without pretentiousness
on Call To Order by the C.E.O.;

those present vary in their interest.

First Business: Minutes of a month ago.

Then following, Reports From Officers,
and next, Accounts by each Committee Chair
detailing progress to the membership
of how the current operations fare.

And then, the Summary of Finances,
long-columned facts and figures, dues and debts,
together which explain the balances
and total satisfactions or regrets.

Unfinished Business is next reviewed—
suspended questions put once more to test.
Opinions sway, consensus calms each feud;
old issues one by one are set to rest.

Attention shifts to fresh initiatives,
new things the members think they want or need.
Depending on support the body gives,
proposals fail, are tabled, or succeed.

Adjourn? That last majority request
is voted "Yea," beginning as it ends
the business, that part of meetings I like best:
The time we talk about our dogs with friends.

PIPER, MARMOT AND ME

A marmot, according to Webster, is a "stout-bodied, short-legged rodent with coarse fur, a short bushy tail and small ears." It should also be noted that they are non-aggressive, and prefer to sound a sharp shrill whistle before scurrying to the protection of their tunnels in the rocks whenever a threat appears. In Colorado, marmots are most often found near and above treeline, but they are also present in lesser numbers at lower elevations where the habitat suits them.

About 25 miles west of Loveland, Colorado, a scenic and popular path, called the "Dunraven Trail," follows the north fork of the Big Thompson River for several miles. Piper, my Scottish Terrier, and I have hiked it many times and in every season, because it is such a pleasant walk and offers such a variety of plants, birds, insects, animals and brookside scenery. Since the trail begins at 8,000 feet, it really isn't considered marmot country, but we were to discover that indeed it is.

It had rained overnight the morning we set out on the trail. The puddles had lost their surface water, but the clear smooth wet impressionable mud marked many spots along the way where the water had drained away. We were leisurely making our way, with Piper in the lead some 30 to 40 feet out front, when we came to a rise in the trail which was sufficient to block our view for any distance ahead. Piper casually trotted up the slope and disappeared over the crest as I, lagging behind, sauntered along enjoying the beauty and peacefulness of our hike.

All of a sudden, just as I reached the incline leading

to the small hill, over the top and at full speed came a marmot bounding directly at me! I stood frozen in disbelief as the chubby creature realized he was about to impact me at full gallop. He stiffened his body and planted all four feet in a frantic attempt to stop. As I watched, he skidded to a halt so close to me that when I looked down, I could not see my own toes in front of me. In a split second he regained his balance, turned abruptly, bounded off the narrow trail and disappeared into the brush.

Immediately following this surprise, Piper burst over the hill in excited pursuit at the same breakneck speed as the marmot. Fortunately, by this time I was beginning to recover from my astonishment and reacted in time to bend over and collar him to stop the chase.

Things calmed down to normal after that. In a few minutes we continued on our way up the short incline and over the small hill. What we found on the other side, described in the smooth mud by two sets of tell-tale tracks, told the whole marvelous tale:

A marmot had been walking along, minding his own business, when all of a sudden a dog trotted by—going in the opposite direction. As they passed, dog and marmot were equally surprised and in the momentary confusion each shot forward in a panic acceleration. After a couple of leaps, the dog realized the marmot was running in the other direction, reversed his course, and the chase was on! And over the hill they came....

It was all written in pawprints in the mud with such clarity and eloquence that any reader could easily decipher the tracks and delight in their story.

AMAZING SENSE

I thought perhaps I wouldn't mention
the steak scraps. Wrong! No matter how I try
I can't escape his keen attention.
There is no keeping secrets from this guy.

I saw my friend who has a she-cat,
which lightly rubbed against me with her fur.
I got the 3rd degree: "Who was that?"
He looked at me as if I'd slept with her.

I thought I'd have a little ice cream,
not very much—enough for just a lick.
He'd never notice, would it not seem?
Well, guess again, he doesn't miss a trick.

I thought I'd saunter outside solo,
just slip away and take a little walk.
He let me know that was a "no-no,"
and had his say—you should have heard him talk.

But then I got his lead and collar,
announcing our appointment with the vet.
Although I wave at him and holler,
he doesn't seem to see or hear me yet.

SOME PARENTS' CHILDREN NEVER GROW UP

If the lack of good manners
is bothering you,
wait and see what
obedience training can do.
In a couple of years
this roughhousing pup
will have mastered good manners
and be all grown up.

It's a shame we don't see
every canine well-trained
as they surely should be,
but it's simply explained:
The problem would take
about two years to cure
if the owners were only
as quick to mature.

BLACKIE

He was whelped in the fall
at a place to the south
with a bend in his tail,
crooked tooth in his mouth.

He was first of the three
to be born on that day,
and to tell who was who
his tail gave him away.

As he grew from a pup
to a handsome young male
you could measure his pluck
by the turn of his tail.

And his love of retrieve
was a special delight
as persistence made up
for an imperfect bite.

And but once did he act
just a little but smug
when his tooth proved to be
an advantage at tug.

But whatever his faults
or the mischief he wrought
I remember him best
by affectionate thought
of a four-legged friend
with a sociable style
and a hook in his tail
and a crook in his smile.

EQUALS

The letter came as some surprise—
her words about a pup.

When everything was said and done,
I thought she'd given up.

Yet after all this time has passed,
despite a broken heart,
she wrote about her change of mind
and making a new start.

How pleased I was to read the lines.
How good it was to know
another pup had found a home;
another love would grow.

I knew, despite her troubled choice
to fill the empty space,
that she would love them equally.

Each has a special place.

PIPER TO BINGO

I say: Avoid wood ticks.
Be wary—don't make friends with cats.
And keep away from fleas,
and every chance you get, chase rats.

Don't beg at table during meals.
Do take the blame for things you did.
Don't chew the furniture,
and never bite the neighbor's kid.

And when you get to go,
your collar must be worn outside.
Make sure you come when called,
and don't get carsick when you ride.

When hunting in the field,
don't be the first to need First Aid.
If needed, take a bath.
At night, accept the bed you've made.

Conduct yourself so that
the Master, with great pride, will tell
how much you are a friend,
how you serve faithfully and well.

DIXIE

Vacationing some weeks ago
one lady I was pleased to see
was Dixie, an old friend I know
from way back when—a Brittany.

She was as friendly as could be.
Yet, gazing at her graying face
what I saw there reminded me
how a dozen years can slow a pace.

Preparing for the coming fall
we ran the dogs, including her.
Responding to the hunting call,
no pup, she worked as if she were.

Her hearing's poor, her eyesight, too;
her legs don't carry quite as far,
but give her credit where it's due—
her nose is always up to par.

She proves it with her interest
in finding out about field mice.
On hunts she "points" each hidden nest,
for which she's scolded once or twice.

If some day comes when I'm as old
I think it would be very nice
if someone, likewise, had to scold
my curiosity of mice.

THE MIND READER

The closet door swings shut.
Already he knows what
it's all about.
I wouldn't pick these shoes
without a plan to use
them hiking out.

My clothing is the same.
He figures out the game
without a fail.
The jacket that I choose
is one I only use
out on the trail.

I puzzle for a hat,
but he knows which one that
I'm sure to find.
It's nice to have a friend
to walk with now and then
who knows my mind.

THE LOST PIPER MINE

One cannot live long in the mountains of the west without eventually becoming curious about the mining activities of a century ago. Fortunes were made or lost with the strike of a pick or the stroke of a pen. Piper, my Scottish Terrier, and I hiked many mountain trails where the vanishing evidence told of countless prospecting ventures of long ago. These fragments of history could hardly be ignored, and eventually, we too became interested in learning more about the boom days of precious metals' mining.

We began by reading book after book from the large selection which is available about the subject. They cover everything from histories of the mines and the miners to the various methods of finding, identifying, and extracting gold, silver, lead, copper, and even molybdenum. Better familiarization with these topics made our trips into the mining areas more interesting and enjoyable.

While hiking, we occasionally tried our hand at panning in a few of the promising streams (always unsuccessfully, however). And, we collected small samples of "ore," which at the time seemed sure to contain some valuable element (and on closer inspection always proved to be quite ordinary). We were vaguely aware, of course, that we would never get rich, but the timeless dream of sudden success did put a little extra excitement into our hikes into the more remote mountain mining areas.

One day, during a casual conversation with a friend, I discovered that he had spent several years in Alaska. Furthermore, he had become fascinated with the subject of gold prospecting and had become somewhat of an expert

on the subject. I questioned him eagerly, absorbing as much of what he told me as I could. He even showed me some nuggets he had panned and ore samples that he had mined. Perhaps the best information he passed along to me was that the easiest place to find gold was where it was imbedded in quartz, a common milky-white kind of rock.

Naturally, from that moment on, I examined nearly every piece of quartz that Piper and I came across on our hikes. Few yielded any "color," but once in a while we were rewarded by a piece containing the bright flakes of "fool's gold." Few, that is, until we came across a whole shelf of sparkling quartz imbedded in an exposed rock cliff.

I hammered fist-sized samples from the slab. Certain that some of the glistening flakes must be real gold, I was inspired to give our "secret claim" a name. Moved by the spirit of the moment, and in honor of my "co-pro prospector," I called it "The Lost Piper Mine."

At home, we displayed and admired our intriguing treasures, which reminded us all through the winter of our successful prospecting adventure. The following summer, we returned on another hike to that same area, planning to add a few more of the glittering samples to our collection. When we reached the spot of our previous discovery, however, I stood dumbfounded in amazement. The entire slab of quartz had been gouged out of the mountain and hauled away! Where the shiny-flecked quartz deposit had once been, was now only a gaping hole—two feet high, ten feet wide and three feet deep—in the face of the rock cliff.

Obviously, someone did recognize real gold there. And now, it will truly always be The Lost Piper Mine.

BEST FRIEND

The very best friend
I ever had
was a fearless soul
and a friendly lad.

He was shorter than me
by just a tad—
some 15 inches
from ear to pad.

His disposition
was always glad
and I never knew him
a dog gone mad.

Whenever my outlook
was going bad
he wouldn't permit me
to paws on sad.

The very best friend
I ever had,
whenever he dressed,
was simply clad
in a collar and lead
and tartan plaid.

KIN

His picture's on our Christmas card.
Paw prints co-sign outgoing mail.
His wooden likeness guards the yard
with a wind-driven wagging tail.

Our sweaters hang here side by side.
He eats the same food I am fed.
We take our morning walk in stride,
and at night bunk a double bed.

How do we differ? Take a look
where we record our ancestry.
While mine is in the Family Book,
his is written at AKC.

But he puts smiles on my face,
and I'm the reason his tail wags.
We share a very special place
where I'm kin on his I.D. tags.

GHOST DOG

**An invisible canine
inhabits my yard,
and what you're not seeing
is Ghost Dog on guard.**

**You likely won't notice
his transparent scowl
as he paces the grounds
on security prowl.**

**And it's doubtful you'll hear
silent growling sounds
as he warns the intruders
while making his rounds.**

**Still he loves to be petted
and he's eager to play,
but he's very well-mannered
and he knows when to stay.**

**You can't see him or hear him,
if you could you'd agree
that inside of my mind
he takes good care of me.**

TOP DOG

He howls at my harmonica,
although I do the best I can.
I'm at a disadvantage here—
He's Dog, and I am only Man.

I think that I am Number One
(though I am only what I am),
but when it comes to protocol,
I sign below his sire and dam.

He is Top Dog, and sure of it.
While some might take these as affronts,
I'm one who's very proud of him
and not been disappointed once.

BROWN-EYED BEGGAR BOY

I'm sitting at my plate
beside the kitchen window.
The brown-eyed beggar boy
is standing at my elbow.

It seems we have a date
whenever I am eating.
He's ready to enjoy
in case I may be treating.

He has a master plan
when waiting at my table:
He'll finish all the food
if ever I'm unable.

It does me little good
to wonder if he could—
I'm pretty sure he can
and certain that he would.

WHO'S WHO

A natural mistake to make—
I think of him as mine.
But after all our give and take,
it's me who suits him fine.

THE GOOD OLD BOYS

My leather jacket feels
as worn as his old fur,
but not as warm, for sure,
nor does it fit as well.

I sometimes join the cur
for little naps he steals,
small clues that give away
a truth that he conceals.

Although he'd never tell
he's slower now to fetch,
those legs don't start the day
without an extra stretch.
And while there's nothing wrong
with how we walk the street
our walks aren't quite as long
as those in younger feet.

We make an honest pair,
as both with graying hair,
and failing eyes and ears
and slowing step, make miles
that match our lengthened years.
But we wear Sunday smiles
enjoying what life's worth
together on this earth.

September 20, 1983 — April 2, 1994



lost dog.

I lost this dog, mind you,
a thousand years ago.
Still can't sleep decent.

Wondr what it is?
Ought to know, I'm smart.
Been to college: degreed.

Ought to know, surely;
what is it I don't know?
Maybe think to repent,

sleeve upon the heart.
Guess I'm acting queerly
feelings on the frizz.

Nevr felt like this
till recently. Can't sleep.
Give me a break, relent,

let bygones bye. Let do.
Let me dive the deep
and deal the time ascent.

This is the real feel.
This is the last deal.
The dog should be here, too.

DO DOGS GO TO HEAVEN?

A heaven without dogs
isn't where I'd care to be.
If heaven's not for him,
then it's surely not for me.



MOUNT AUDUBON

A LOVE LETTER

Thursday, August 25, 1994

Dear Mom,

Hope that you are well.

Yesterday I hiked Mount Audubon. I went up with Piper and came home alone.

The alarm went off at 5 am. I got up and shaved and showered and dressed. Then I loaded a small drink cooler and my backpack, which I had readied the previous evening, into the Jeep. Filled up the gas tank on the way to Aunt Alice's restaurant.

After breakfast it took an hour to drive up to the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area. As the road began to climb into the foothills, a big orange-red sun was rising on the horizon behind me, a spectacular sight even in the rear view mirror. Passing Brainard Lake, we saw one lone fisherman casting flies. I drove a mile further to the trailhead and parked. Got the canteen from the cooler, hoisted my pack onto my back, and we started out on the trail to Mount Audubon at 7:15 am.

It is about a $3\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike to the top of Mount Audubon. The trail begins at 10,480 feet above sea level and the summit is at 13,223 feet, so the elevation gain is something over 2,700 feet.

The weather was absolutely perfect. The temperature was in the low 50's, and there was no breeze whatsoever. The sky was mostly covered with a transparent overcast, and the sun was already half shielded. I considered wearing my jacket, but didn't, because I knew that soon my efforts against the continual incline of the trail would keep me warm.

The first mile of the hike is through thick forest, and I went hatless. When a pine cone bounced off the top of my head, I took a couple of minutes to rest and watch a squirrel at the very top of a tall slender pine tree as he cut several cones loose to fall around me. I knew that later he would descend and eat a few, but would cache most of them for the coming winter.

After the first mile the trail approaches tree line at about 11,200 feet. Near tree limit I startled a pika foraging next to the trail, and it scurried away. I stopped to watch and it returned, and not too cautiously, either. As I stood quietly, it nibbled at the grass about 6 feet away.

At $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles the trail to Mount Audubon splits from the Buchanan Pass trail. The route to Audubon continues unceasingly upward across the rocks and the tundra, and from this point forward it winds higher and higher above the tree line.

A short distance past the junction a small melt-off rivulet from a permanent snow field located further up the mountain crosses the trail. Nearly an hour into the hike, we stopped there for a 5 minute rest. The water was crystal clear and very, very cold. I soaked my handkerchief and swabbed my face several times. Then I soaked it again and

tucked it around my neck inside my shirt, dripping wet. It was 8:15 when we set out again.

A cool breeze began to blow, which continued on the tundra throughout the rest of the hike. It counteracted the warming of the sun well enough. Where the pack rested against my back, my shirt was constantly soaked with sweat, but otherwise I was comfortable.

After hiking continuously, except for short pauses to regain my breath, we stopped again where the water from a small ground spring crosses the trail. I repeated the cooling process with my handkerchief and drank from the canteen. There were Arctic Gentians, deep blue flowers tinged with green, starting to blossom near the water. It was 9:10 when we started again.

About a half hour later we reached the base of the summit area. It is a huge dome-shaped cap which consists of a massive collection of steeply piled boulders. From there, the route to the top is perhaps a third of a mile long, but the pitch of the slope requires a hiker to move forward in a continual crouch, scrambling from rock to rock. It is not dangerous, but steep enough so that walking upright isn't possible much of the way. The elevation gain from the base of the slope to the top of Mount Audubon is about 500 feet. Without resting, we started up.

After a period of steady progress, we reached a small level area which is about a 10 minute hike from the summit. I stopped there, as I had been planning to do. While we paused, I thought about the many, many previous hikes that Piper and I had done together. I talked to him about them, just as I had talked to him throughout the

morning as we worked our way up the trail to this small resting place. I let him know how I felt and that there wasn't anything much better that could happen to a person in life than sharing company with a good dog. I drank a can of pop from my pack and put my gear in order. After about 10 minutes I got myself together and we set out to complete the short distance to the summit.

We arrived at the top of Mount Audubon at 10:20. A brisk breeze was blowing. It was cool, but pleasant. I dropped my pack and took out the pictures of our first hike together to this summit 9 years ago. I cried a lot. I was glad we were alone, because for a time I wailed at the top of my lungs and just couldn't stop.

I hugged him and said everything I could think of to say to him, and then I sent his ashes flying free with many sweeps of my hands. I sat there by myself for awhile, and then gathered up my things and started down. It was 10:40.

The trip down was more numb stumbling along than it was a hike. As I reached the base of the dome area I met two ladies, both in their mid-20's, hiking up with a beautiful Irish Setter. I stopped them and asked a favor—"Could I please pet your dog?" They saw my tears and distress and although surprised by that, they tried to console me.

The dog's name was Ruby. She was perhaps 3 or 4 years old, very well behaved, and friendly. I petted her for several minutes, all the while explaining to them why I was so upset. I showed them Piper's pictures. When I left them, they were crying nearly as much as me, but I know they felt a whole lot better about having Ruby than they did

a few minutes earlier.

I passed some other uphill hikers in the next mile or so. I exchanged polite greetings without slowing down.

Further ahead, I noticed a man and a woman stopped on the trail. They had two chocolate-colored Labradors with them, which were prancing around and playing. As I approached, I could see that the couple would alternately drink from their canteens and then tip them so that the dogs could drink from them as well.

Their fussing and concern over their dogs really struck me and I was crying pretty hard by the time I reached them. It took a few minutes before I could talk, but when I was finally able to explain myself, they were both very comforting.

"Montana" was the oldest Lab, probably 7 or 8, and the other was their "new" dog—maybe a year old. The couple appeared to be in their early 30's, and although they told me all of their names, I just wasn't listening and only remember "Montana." While trying to console me, the lady told me that neither of them was interested in having children and that their dogs were their "kids." They seemed to understand me and were not bothered by my tears.

When I was a little more composed, they asked me about my dog and I showed them Piper's pictures and told them about him. They had hiked Mount Audubon previously and were familiar with it. The lady was enthusiastic about what I had done. She said it was well thought out and appropriate—"What a great idea"—was the way she put it. We talked a little longer and when I got myself

somewhat collected I hugged the Labs, thanked the couple for their understanding, and continued down the trail.

About 300 yards further along I heard a short "chirp-cooing" sound. I stopped and listened, already knowing what it was. After a brief silence, the sound repeated, and was soon joined by other chirps. I kept looking, seeing nothing, until finally one of the creatures moved. They were White-tailed Ptarmigans, year-round residents of the tundra and rarely-seen members of the grouse family, camouflaged to near invisibility by their brown-speckled coats. There were 4 of them—one slightly larger than the others, so I guessed it was a hen with 3 chicks. Two were beside me, about 30 and 40 feet from the trail. The other two were below me on the trail, perhaps 50 feet ahead.

I stood motionless. The two below me on the trail started uphill to rejoin the others. One left the trail, to pass well clear of me, but the other came directly toward me up the trail. Clearly it knew I was there, but was curious. It approached very slowly and very deliberately, taking each step with great care, as it came to investigate me. It kept looking me over, thoroughly examining me all the while it advanced. I stood perfectly still, moving nothing except my eyes to study the bird.

It had marvelously random multi-colored feather patterns. The head and neck were mostly small brown dots, line patterns and mottling against white. The wings, back, and most of the tail feathers displayed dots, lines, mottling, patches and patterned mixtures in every possible shade of brown with touches of gray and white. Unbelievably, they also contained subdued splashes of orange. It had a white lower chest and belly, and the "signature

feature" of the species was strikingly clear—the pure white softly feathered legs and feet—completely covered except for the claw nail at the end of each toe. The eyes were black and the beak color deepened from gray to a dark blue near the tip. The final dazzling color that I saw was a thin line above each eye—bright orange, like a brash stroke of gaudy eye-liner. The bird passed two feet from me, close enough so that I could easily have bent over and stroked it without moving a foot. I waited until the birds moved away, then continued downhill.

I passed the Buchanan trail junction and re-entered the forest. The trees thickened again as I reached the flatter ground. The last mile seemed very long and I realized that I was extremely tired. I tripped and fell once, just as I had on the way up, but without any damage.

At 12:55 pm I reached the parking area. I lifted off my pack and canteen, and after a long drink, stowed them in the Jeep. The hike was finished. It was the hardest hike I've ever done.

Please take care, Mom. I will try to write again soon.

Love,
Lee

FOR PIPER AND ME

It's not a question whether
we'll hike again together,
Old Man and Crooked Tail.
It's just a question when.

We'll share another trail,
walking side by side
along the Great Divide.

Oh wait for me till then.



PIPER AND LEE

ABOUT PIPER

In Canon City, Colorado, on September 20, 1983, when the first puppy was whelped, Dennisia Aragon called him "the piper,"—to distinguish him as the "lead dog" of her litter of 3 and also as a way to individually identify him. On AKC papers, he became "Jo-Dens Highland Piper, C.D." Later, because of his high country hiking accomplishments, he earned the nickname "Top Dog." But, "Piper" was what we always called him, and what he always answered to.

I had the incredible good fortune to receive him as a Christmas gift. He was bravely offered to me despite my insistent "No Dog Ever Again" statements, which resulted from the pain of losing my two best canine friends about 3 years earlier. However, one look at Piper, after the surprise of hearing that he was a gift to me, and I fell totally in love with him, a condition I admit I have never gotten over.

He was curious, enthusiastic about new experiences, and he enjoyed learning. He discovered TV himself and always stopped what he was doing to watch the animals in the commercials. As he grew older I tuned in the "nature" programs for him—those featuring coyotes, tigers, and the like, and he would often sit and watch the whole program.

He learned to track pheasants, to walk logs across fast mountain streams, to ride on a snow saucer and in his own bicycle basket, and he even successfully handled "going to ground" in a few working terrier practice trials.

He earned an AKC Companion Dog degree (C.D.) with respectable scores in 4 trials. His real obedience accomplishments, however, were demonstrated on hiking

trails where his manners were impeccable. We hiked countless miles together—from our longest hike of 17 miles up to 11,600 ft. at the Continental Divide to our highest hike to the summit of Mount Elbert (Elevation 14,433 ft.), Colorado's tallest mountain.

But, time passes. On April 2nd, 1994, when our last hope of surgery could only confirm the presence of untreatable advanced liver cancer, I directed the veterinarian to give my dearest friend the final peace of deep sleep. The poems and articles in this book are my testimony to the belief that "there isn't anything much better that could happen to a person in life than sharing company with a good dog."Piper honored me with that privilege.

ABOUT LEE

In 1953, while in high school, Lee had his first poem published. Since then, his writings have been published in a variety of newsletters, newspapers, magazines and books.

After a career of more than 35 years in air traffic control, retirement in 1992 marked a change in life style. His writing efforts continue, but his interests in traveling and camping have resulted in many outings with Jeep and camper, including a long leisurely trip to Alaska and a fall color tour of the New England states. And travels continue.

Two days before Thanksgiving Day of 1994, a young red brindle male Scottie, whom he named "Rusty," came home to live with Lee. He has one comment about this—"As far as I know, nobody says we can't fall in love again."

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Oh How My Piper Played is a collection of poems and articles begun in 1983 and completed in 1995. The writings feature Piper and other dogs (as well as a few people) that the author has known. Although many of the selections were previously published elsewhere, several appear in print here for the first time.

This book is self-published. Other books by the same author include Once In Love With A Puppy and Love Poems From a Poor Man. The latest editions of these books were produced by Netzler Publishing and printed by Adams Press.

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