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Gone to the Dogs

In our present society we see signs of change, which could only be characterized as decadent by any measure. Over one half of marriages end in divorce; the rate of illegitimate child birth is over 30% and even higher in poor families. One in two hundred Americans is incarcerated. Our financial system is in shambles with businesses going down right and left, and the unemployment rate is rising to a 25-year high. Looking at all the signs, we have a sense of deep foreboding. At least as Christians, we can look at the eternal perspective with hope. Now my paper is not a polemic on the state of our society. It is neither a panacea to cure all the problems, nor a sneaky way of introducing Fundamentalist thinking about the rapture and the apocalypse. We encounter enough bad news every day in the newspaper and on the TV, so I will divert to a different path and literally go to the dogs. Actually this is a quadrology or perhaps tetrology with parallel accounts of four main characters- Buddy, Chi, Bailey and Stokely.

Growing up in Murray, Kentucky almost everyone had a family dog. French Eye, Bob, Sandy, Law and Puzzle were well known, and they accepted us as their friends. My family had raised bird dogs for years, so I grew up with Old Lou, a setter who would lie in the yard on summer days watching me. Later came Tip, a large lemon-and-white pointer and excellent bird dog who loved to confront me when I arrived home on my bike. Running at full speed he would throw a paw on each shoulder, knock me down and lick my face. Little Moose, our house dog, was a fox terrier with a hair-trigger bark – even a quivering leaf would provoke him into a high-pitched non-ending *arf arf arf*. His successor Buddy was the smartest of the lot, and in fact, was college-educated. A black, short-haired Fox Terrier with a white patch on his chest and toes, he had a great personality. Our next door neighbors were the Lowry's, and Dr. C.S. Lowry taught the Social Sciences at Murray State. To say that Dr. Sig was a character is a gross understatement as Wendell Rorie and Jim Love will attest. The Good Doctor taught a 9 am

Economics Class on the second story of the Library. Buddy would accompany him on the four block walk to school, even entering the class room with the Doc where he would sit next to the desk and answer roll call with a bark. Now when exam time came around, Buddy failed to attend class. The good Doctor passed out the test papers and then announced. "I've decided to give only one A in this class, and it will go to the Rowlett's dog-- he was the only student smart enough to skip the final exam." As I said, Buddy was college-educated and had a straight A average to show for the effort.

Next, let us look at Chi who was literally a medical "dog-ter" who lived at 218-220 East Gray Street in Louisville during the 1950s. A mixture of German shepherd and something else, he was a handsome fellow who weighed about 70 pounds with a bushy tail that recurved over his back, to the right. The Greek letter Chi, or X in English, was shaved into his right rear flank because after all, he was the official mascot of the Phi Chi Medical Fraternity. More a boarding house than a real Frat, about thirty medical students lived in the two old houses joined by a wooden porch and surrounded by an ornate iron fence. At one time, perhaps in the 1880s, it was a good address and quite elegant with 12-foot high ceilings and gas jets in the walls for lighting. Anna and Cordie, two black ladies of impressive girth, were our cook and server respectively, and unofficial housemothers. This was Chi's home and kingdom. Being the sport that he was, Chi had a number of progeny in the neighborhood including one in particular who was a little smaller but with an important difference--his tail curled to the left rather than the right, so he was christened Levo-Chi. Now if you remember your college chemistry, you will recall that some isomers can be identified as either dextro or levo, according to which side of the molecule an important side chain is located. One of my colleagues insists to this day that Chi was a crafty rascal who would intentionally place a large bone on the sidewalk inside the fence hoping to lure some unsuspecting female inside, and then cut off her escape route with amorous intentions in mind. I realize that might fly in the face of physiological factors like estrus, but a good story is a good story. Anyway, our hero was a *bon vivant* who loved to attend parties for which he had been bathed and properly attired with a red ribbon on his collar. Oertels 92 was his favorite quaff, and he usually imbibed enough to wobble around but never became fractious or obnoxious. So how did Chi arrive at the Phi

Chi house in the first place? He was rescued. One of the main courses in sophomore year of Med School was physiology, and we used animals--chiefly stray dogs--for our laboratory studies and experiments. We were closely supervised by Miss Verhoeff, a representative from the Animal Rescue League, who personally watched very closely to make sure that no unnecessary cruelty was involved. Our animals were then euthanized after we had finished. Now Chi arrived on the scene from the Dog Pound to serve as one of the animals, but a couple of students were impressed by his appearance and intelligence. Rather than have him lie on the operating table to give his last full measure of devotion to science, they spirited him out the back door, down the metal steps, and over to the House about four blocks away. Now you might think that Chi wouldn't want to get back within a country mile of the old gray castle on the corner of First and Chestnut that housed the first two years of medical training, but such was not the case. Each morning when the students walked to school, he would troop along and enter a classroom, usually sitting on the top row of the amphitheatre steps and listening to the lecture. At a suitable time, he would saunter down the steps and sit directly in front of the lectern, his ears pricked up expectantly and awaiting a tidbit carried in the Professors lab coat pocket. If unnoticed he would bark softly and that usually got results. Chi was well received by the faculty with one exception -- Dr. Arch Cole. Dr. Cole taught gross anatomy, and perhaps he was afraid that our hero might latch on to a choice bite of cadaver meat and run off with it. At any rate, there was mutual animosity between the two. On sight, Dr. Cole would frown and Chi would bristle up, hackles rising and bare his teeth. This endeared our hero to the freshman students who felt exactly the same way but were afraid of displaying their emotions. Actually, Dr. Cole was an excellent teacher but had a confrontational manner not conducive to peace of mind. Now in addition to his pedantic career and social life, our mascot sometimes bought beer for the brothers. Did you say, "bought" beer? Let me explain. If you pinched the tip of Chi's tail he would bark, once for each pinch. On the corner of First and Broadway there was and still is an eating establishment called Clephas', which catered to the medical, dental, pharmaceutical and Presbyterian Theological students who lived in the area. They served excellent bean soup in addition to beer, so often around 10 pm, we would take a study break and head that way. The Bouncer's name was Bradshaw, and he allowed Chi to

come in with the boys and sit at a booth. One student sat on the outside and the other on the inside holding Chi's tail, with his muzzle facing outward. Bar stools were across from the booths, so our point man would engage in conversation another patron who was about two beers into his evening. "Hey fellow, did you know we have a dog who can count?" "Dogs can't count"."We'll bet you a round of beers that he can! What do you say?" Well that seemed unlikely, but often the stooge would fall for it, and the bet was on. "OK Chi, count four for the gentleman." Sure enough, four squeezes of the tail would produce the desired result and the fellow would shake his head in amazement and pay up. Chi seemed to recognize the color of stoplights and was even reputed to assist slightly inebriated Presbyterian theologs across Broadway lest they be hit by a car and create a holy mess. Chi has long since gone, but sometimes I wonder what happened to his portrait that used to hang on the living room wall at 218-220 East Gray Street in Louisville, KY.

Our third featured member of the *Canis familiaris* species is Bailey, a chocolate lab who was born appropriately enough in Bailey, Colorado. He was adopted into the home of our daughter Betsy and family in Englewood, a two-month-old pup who fit right in with the three boys, John, Ryan and Wesley. In about nine months he reached adult size--pretty big--and was affable, loved the water and also became a mountain climber of note. In fact, he scaled ten of the 14,000 ft high peaks in the Colorado Rockies along with his family. Now Bailey was intelligent and learned to help out around the house. Each morning he was let out the door to perform his morning toilet and returned with a copy of the Denver Post in his mouth, which he would drop at his master's feet. This was not entirely gratuitous because he was rewarded with a dog biscuit upon completion of the task. Bailey's friends were not limited to humans, and his favorite companion was a squat little Heinz 57 named Cowboy who wore a red bandana around his neck. This stout-bodied, short-legged specimen had the uncanny ability to crawl under fences and get into mischief, and because they were frequently seen together, Bailey shared some of the blame. We felt it was more guilt by association, but it did sully his pristine reputation. Our hero also introduced the family to new friends and neighbors. The Hackemers spent the night in their mountain cabin in Silverthorne as often as possible and the dog went along. Old Bailey would go out the following morning to do his business but also return

with a morning paper. This was all very fine except the family didn't subscribe to a paper in Silverthorne, but not to be deterred, the pooch appropriated one from one of the neighbor's and brought it inside. Our family got to meet several of their mountain neighbors in this way, not altogether in a friendly fashion. Now the mountains brought other adventures less pleasant like an encounter with a skunk who clearly won the spitting contest. Even after a six-gallon ablution of tomato juice, the aroma of *Eau de Skunk* still permeated the Ford Explorer as they drove the 80 miles back home, with windows widely cracked. An even worse encounter with an unknown assailant was even less pleasant and resulted in more than olfactory damage. Something mean and ugly ripped Mr. Bailey so badly that it required 300 stitches to repair the damage to his hide. In his declining years, the family procured a Golden Receiver to keep him company, but Buddy never learned how to bring in the paper and his main trick was to deposit partially digested socks which had traversed the GI tract in their backyard. The old boy lived a long and useful life, gradually slowing down as time took its toll, and finally expired at age 12-1/2. He was laid to rest under a fir tree in their back yard and lamented by all who knew him.

No history of canines in the Rowlett archives would be complete without mention of the redoubtable Stokely Carmichael, a Beagle nonpareil. Born in the 60s--yes, he was a 60s child or should I say pup--in a litter of 10 or so. Early on, he showed signs of leadership among the litter by being the largest, blackest, most loud-mouthed, and most adventurous of the pups and seemed to always get the others into trouble of one sort or another. He, of course, was named for the Civil Rights activist of that era. His human owners Bill and Martha were friends and gave us this cute, cuddly black and tan hound with the wet nose, soft skin, floppy ears and pleading eyes. He joined our household of two parents and three children ages 7, 9 and 11-years-old and became a came a fixture. Early on, he learned that a disapproving scowl from the senior female (SF) along with a voice of disapproval meant he was in trouble. Having followed Freddie, Brownie and Spots as the family dog, he had something to prove. And it was only with some reluctance that the SF would even agree to let us keep him. Housebreaking went according to schedule, and Stokely seemed to thrive on Jim Dandy dog food supplemented by a few handouts from

the kitchen table--particularly items which certain children might surreptitiously give to him. He enjoyed frolicking in the yard with Mary Lane, Betsy and John and would tag along with them in our neighborhood to visit other friends. Old Dollar Dallas, an ancient 15-year-old black Cocker Spaniel who lived across the street, put up with his antics pretty well, But Buppy, the snaggle-toothed little dog of uncertain ancestry who lived behind us, was a little snippy when Stokely wanted to play. Our dog grew larger and longer as time went and grew into adult size, larger than most classic rabbit hunting Beagles, and he had a good disposition. Stokely had two characteristics that were rather prominent. One was a chronic malfunction of the GI tract that led to a release of copious amounts of methane gas into the surrounding atmosphere, and which was quite evident to anyone who could smell within 20 feet of him. The other was a throwback to his ancient ancestors--a ghostly howl that would waft from his shiny black chops while sleeping on his back and dreaming. All four legs would furiously paw the air as he dreamed of chasing rabbits in the sage field. He loved to hide under the drapes. Often we didn't know he was even there until hearing the ghostly moan. Stokely and the SF had a difference of opinion on what parts of the house he was entitled to visit, and this led to occasional conflict. Generally Stokely was an affable sort and even got along well with the stray cat who adopted us, Tommy Noodle. Toward the end of our tenure in Bowling Green, he did manage to disaffect a couple of neighbors. On Halloween evening, Stokely went out trick-or-treating with the kids, and it was a rainy night. When some kind soul opened her door to drop candy into waiting sacks, our dog would run into the house to dry off and shake himself vigorously on the rug before being unceremoniously shooed out. On the day we left Bowling Green, Stokely pulled an entirely new trick. He actually ran into the yard with a live chicken in his mouth. Dr. Clark, the next-door neighbor, saw it and yelled loudly. That startled the pup enough so the little red hen, or whatever, could escape. Maybe it *was* high time we left! The trip to Hoptown from BG was made on a cold clear afternoon of around 18 degrees F. I drove our little blue Volkswagen while Marilyn, the kids and the faithful hound followed in the Chrysler. When they drove into the driveway, I noticed that all four windows were down, rather strange for winter weather. The interior of the car was filled with methane fumes contributed by none other than--you guessed it!

Stokely adjusted rapidly to his new environment and made new friends, human and canine, but the lure of romance got him into trouble. A neighbor down the street raised beagles. When one of the females in heat cast out the mating smell, our man was down there standing in line. The neighbor didn't realize all the sterling qualities our hound possessed and sent him scurrying home with a load of buckshot in the rear. This was to prove fortuitous in the future. In the early days of 1970, the poor pup encountered a car with predictable results. I had let him out for nature's call, and he failed to return for several hours. Finally a cold, miserable beagle dragged himself to our backdoor in much pain. A trip to the local vet revealed a broken pelvis, but with tender care and tincture of time, he made a full recovery. The old boy enjoyed going down to Farmer's Pond with John and Chuck and enjoyed life in general but again was a little stubborn. The SF had a rule: No dogs past the den. One afternoon, she was surprised to find one black-and-tan beagle sleeping on her bed, which provoked a fierce reaction. But even worse than that, the said SF found a live tick on her pillow that night. Guess who lost housedog privileges and now slept in a cold, unheated storage room? One final episode almost provoked a Hatfield-McCoy feud. Our family had left on a mission trip to Zambia, leaving the neighbors in charge of the hound and they who were to provide food and water for him daily. Upon our return, we were saddened to learn (at least four of us were) that he had disappeared. We figured that perhaps a car had hit him and that we would never again see our beloved Beagle. Wrong. Three months later, Marilyn went shopping at the Houchens Grocery when who should appear but our dog. He greeted Marilyn effusively, jumped into our car and a joyous reunion awaited him on South Sunset Circle. There was one disturbing element – Stokely was wearing a chain around his neck. Obviously, someone else had claimed ownership. We watched the paper each evening and about three days later saw a want ad. "Missing – black and tan beagle. Last seen around Houchens Grocery Monday afternoon, Please call number 885 – XXXX". So I called to inform the new owner that indeed the black-and-tan animal was safely home again at our house. Well the voice on the other end of the line was a friend of ours (up until then at least) and insisted on coming over to our house immediately to check the identity. He was an anesthetist named Arthur Bowles. "That's my dog Homer," he

claimed. Even after being shown puppy pictures of Stokely, he refused to accept it. "All black and tan hounds look alike, and that's my Homer." He was adamant about it. "Where did you get the dog?" we asked. "Oh I bought him from a farmer on the edge of town." So we called up the farmer and asked him the same question. "*Where did you get the dog?*" His devious answer was original if not truthful. "Well, this dog dealer from Murray drove into my driveway and asked, 'Fellow, would you like to buy a good rabbit hunting Beagle?' I said, sure, how much? He said twenty-five dollars' so I paid him cash; never got his name and never saw him before or since." The Medical Staff at the Hospital got a huge charge about the whole situation and opined that of all the stubborn staff members, we were the two most stubborn. In a flash of inspiration, we recalled that our Stokely had suffered a fractured pelvis, and the only way to settle the argument was to get X-rays. Lo and behold, the films showed not only the healed pelvic fractures, but also the same buckshot pattern as before. That cinched it. End of story? Well, not quite. Stokely stayed at our house for about two weeks and then Helen Bowles called. "Homer" was back at their house. We brought him home but a week later Helen called again. Helen allowed him to sleep in a nice warm closet next to the water heater while *Hard Hearted Hannah* made him sleep in that cold storage room, fleas and all. It was obvious that our dog had bonded with the Bowles family, and so we yielded to the inevitable and let them keep him. End of story? No, still not. Rabbit season had just started and Stokely/Homer had been out all night hunting on his own. He trotted home all worn out, but Arthur promptly loaded him into the car and went rabbit hunting at a friend's house. The friend had a household Poodle who also went along on the hunt. It was he, not Stokely/Homer, who flushed all the rabbits. This was a tremendous blow to any self-respecting Beagle--to allow a Poodle of all things, to outhunt him. The next day, the noble Stokely completely disappeared from view, never to be seen again. We feel that really he died of a broken heart because of the embarrassment. End of the story? Yup, finally.