

# Appointment with Pohlman

## Sophie Clueless



By Ralph Pohlman

My current dog is Sophie Clueless. As you might expect, she came to me from my daughter, Lisa, the veterinarian, who decided, after we had to put Maggie down, (my much loved springer spaniel who was old, blind and had had a stroke), that I needed a dog in my life. Wouldn't you know it, she had just such a rescued beagle in her office.

Sophie is very sweet, very loving and at first, looking into those liquid brown eyes, it is hard to tell that there is a big open space behind them. Just like some people, she is SBS (Sweet But Stupid). I have had dogs all my life, but Sophie is far and away the dumbest.

However, there are some compensating factors, the first being that when I leave the house, it doesn't matter whether it is for an hour or for 10 minutes, she welcomes me back like I am the messiah. Leaping, running, howling, she bolts from room to room in her joy, sliding across floors and banging into furniture. Unlike my wife who might look up from whatever she is doing and mumble, in a sort of disinterested way, "Oh, you're back".

I can hear her before I even come into the house (Sophie, not my wife). She has heard the car door slam and the howling starts. I call it howling but it is really baying, a loud bloodcurdling sound that would wake the neighbours and probably the folks on the next block.

Maybe I should mention that beagles like to talk. Unfortunately their version of talking is the sound

I just described. They may do this while playing. Or on walks. Or when they pick up an interesting scent (and they always pick up an interesting scent). Or when they've been left at home alone. Or for no discernible reason at all, like being approached with a nail clipper.

Sophie also likes our bed, despite having a perfectly comfortable doggie bed on the nearby floor. She likes to take up that space between my wife and me but, unfortunately, she doesn't sleep lengthwise, like we do. She sleeps crosswise, using up most of the centre, crowding us to the sides and anchoring down the covers. She becomes what my wife calls "a transverse beagle".

Beagles are tough to train, even the smart ones. They respond to edible treats, praise, and absolutely nothing else. (Actually, I'm a little like that myself.)

Speaking of treats, it is best to keep edible items out of snatching distance and put a lid on the kitchen trash can. Beagles love to eat and will supplement their diets (translation: steal food) at any opportunity.

We tend to take Sophie with us whenever we go out. That is because, if we leave her at home alone, she can't stand it. The place will be a disaster when we return. And, yes, we have tried putting her in a cage, but she poops in the cage and then gets it all over herself and the cage tray. So it is easier to take her with us.

Hmmm! I'm wondering who has trained whom?

Sophie is not very brave. Nor have I ever seen her get angry or even

growl. She is best at wagging her tail, which goes constantly, varying in speed according to whether she hears her name or there is the possibility of something to eat. She may be sleeping up in our bedroom and I try to quietly open a cupboard door to sneak a cookie and she is bolting down the stairs, tail wagging, and looking at me with that pleading, "Puleeze" look.

I don't want to get too personal about her bathroom habits, but she has her regular "place" out in the yard where she does her business. This becomes a problem when we travel. She will have been in the car most of the day, so, when we stop at a motel, we look for a grassy spot for her. The process takes forever. She inspects every green area, nearby and across the road, maybe around the corner, or over there.

She looks at me and I can see it in her eyes, "Nope, that's not my spot", not seeming to understand that her "spot" is about a thousand miles back in Canada.

Speaking of Canada, hi, it's nice to be home.

## Pucker up for world whistling record

Whistle Radio recently announced that it would be hosting a Guinness Book of World Records attempt to bring together from far and wide the largest ever gathering of whistlers.

The Whistle-off will be held June 30 at the Strawberry Festival and will be led by Stouffville's own mysterious superhero, the Whistler. The Whistler, breaking years of seclusion, has announced that he will be hosting a series of preparatory pucker parties for anyone who would like to purse their lips for the big day. These one hour sessions will allow participants to practise their ensemble whistling and become familiar with some of the tunes that will be used to set the record.

"The Guinness people have given us a challenge, calling on a collective five minutes of whistling to qualify," explained the Whistler, "but I know the citizens of Whitchurch-Stouffville will not be daunted. We have the lungs, we have the tongues, we have the lips and we have the spirit."

The first pucker party, co-sponsored by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, will be held at the library on May 31 at 7:30 p.m. Anyone who can whistle a simple tune is invited to attend and practise their skills. Other pucker parties will follow in June at times and places to be announced - stay tuned!

The Whistler will be there. Will you?

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