

# 792 STEPS ... A PUPPY'S TAIL ... A MYSTERY

BY KEN KLEIN

## CHAPTER ONE



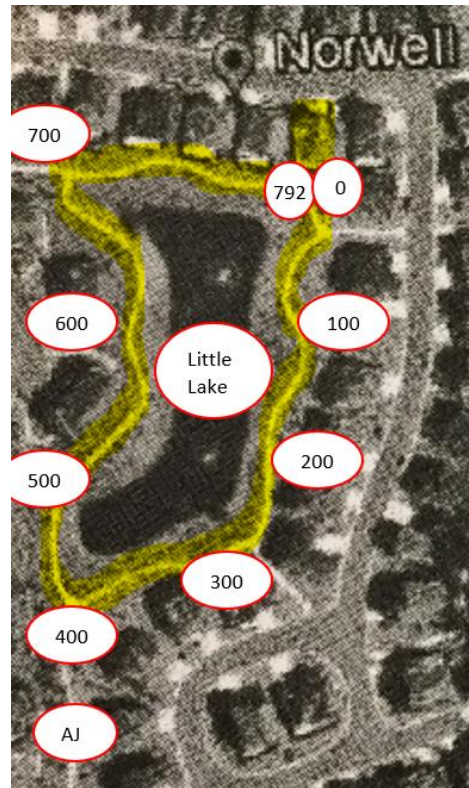
792 Steps ... Where has "it" gone? who took it? What is the mystery? 792 more steps... Is it still gone? Let's see ... Must be gone since it's not here ... 792 steps? What do 792 steps have to do with it's disappearing?

Two more rounds of 792 steps a day are taken, and it is still gone? Sir Reginald Barber picked up a few gosling feathers and observed splits in the lower third of each.

"Come on Lassie" summoned Daddy Reggie (Me), as she was more interested in barking at Terry Turtle than doing the next 792 round.

The sun was far from completing its own 792 for the day ... still plenty of time to keep looking

for it ... but what is she sniffing for? Where is that perfect spot? Does Terry know?



Does Father Goose know here it went? Who is Father Goose, you ask? Hmm ... what does Father Goose or Terry have to do with it? ... and which Father Goose was it? There are two Father Geese on 792 ... but you didn't know that until now. There is a lot you don't know yet about 792 ... where it is, what it is, how little it is, and why Lassie is so often sniffing it's crevices and mounds. Hang in there and Sir Reginald may eventually figure out the answers to this profound mystery. Did you know that "klein" means "little" in Yiddish?

**792 Steps ... A Puppy's Tail ... A Mystery, by Ken Klein**

At least six times a day Daddy R and Lassie go looking for it with infinite hopes of finding it ... sniffing and sniffing ... looking and watching ... hoping and caring to just find "it".

Is it in the grass? Is it in the water? Is it in the mulch? Is it under a bush or a tree? Is it next to a fence? Is it in the beak of Harry the Heron or Terry the Turtle or Corey the Cormorant or Daisy Duck? Felix the frog just let out a hoarse croak from the shallows ... could he have taken it? How big is it you ask? Why would any of them have wanted it, much less have been able to run, fly, crawl, hop, slither, walk, swim or any other method of taking it?



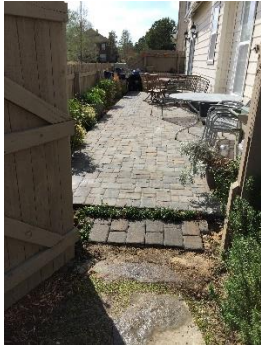
By now you must be getting the idea that the more answers you get from Daddy Reggie, the more questions you have. Lassie wants to tell you everything so she can find it but Reggie still hasn't got a clue what she is looking for, sniffing for, and often must be barking or whining for.

Even when Reggie yells "There's AJ (Aunt Jake)", Lassie will keep sniffing for "it" before she races off to be with AJ and her kemo sabe Marshal Dylan (MD). Then Lassie will jump up on her, wag her adorable fluffy tail, and roll on her back for a good AJ tummy rub.



## 792 Steps ... A Puppy's Tail ... A Mystery, by Ken Klein

Once when trapped within our patio fence, Lassie dug out under the gate and ran to the other side of the Little Lake to visit AJ and MD for the night, and even endured a bath before allowed on AJ's bed. We don't know how much sniffing Lassie did during her 792 race to AJ.



As any journey, whether 792 steps or zillions, they all begin with the first step. Lassie's begins with R uttering "walk, walk, walk, walk, walk" or some variation thereof ... such as a whispered or chanted "wok-wok-wok..." of infinite variety. She will perk up (sometimes) since R may say "wok" but unless he moves to the door, Lassie is smart enough to not be fooled into moving a muscle (except for the opening of one [not both] eyes). When R gets up, he usually first stops at the potty .... thus at step 4 or 5 Lassie opens the bathroom door with her nose to see whether R is doing #1 or #2. #1 calls for her finding her toy ... #2 means a quick nap at the door. My move toward the leash or door means a quick leap out the doggie door to Step 10 or 12.



Step 15 takes R and L to the fence gate where the leash is attached to Lassie's diamond studded collar ... well maybe it's rhinestones.

Through the gate, under the bushes toward the lake ... and a quick Pause That Refreshes (PTR). No sniffing required.

Now for a big problem ... which way is Step 25? Is 26 to the left or right? There is no puppy logic or habit to determine whether Left or Right comes first ... time of day, direction of the sun, which way the wind or rain or snow is coming down. Sometimes it depends on whether her doggie friends are on a wok wok wok and within view, and if the pup is bigger or smaller. She'll head towards a smaller dog and away from a larger dog, unless the larger dog is accompanied by one of her favorite humans. So confusing to Sir R!

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Okay, let's set a standard that since we're concerned with time, let's settle on CLOCKwise being the way we count and assign step numbers ... so Step 27 and beyond is to the LEFT. Does that make sense to you? Well, never mind.

Step 38 takes us past Bello's house, on towards Dakota's then Olive's, around the horn past the two new neighbors living with Melissa and Art ... past Joey's and Teddy's then the home stretch past Zack's place and a tugging pull on the leash to get to Momma and a good drink of water ... and a NAP at 792 ... preferably on Momma's lap on Lassie's recliner or under her bed. The search for it will be resumed in another two or three anxious hours. Doggone ... where is it? Oh well, a nap comes first.

OK, let's get back to Step 38 and a quick sniff to see if Bello is outside, sitting patiently next to the door. Bello couldn't have taken it since she almost never leaves 38. As a matter of fact, last night was the first time Lassie has encountered Bello on the path ... this was pretty close to Step 400 or 500. No way Bello could be the culprit. Besides, this long haired basset is too cute and sedentary to have done this dastardly deed.



Sniff sniff sniff sniff ... is that Dakota? Could be. He's close enough since he lives near Step 150 or 200. Dakota is kinda new to the neighborhood. When did "it" disappear? Before or after Dakota showed up? Lassie can't read a calendar, so we need to get Sir R to help in finding this out. Is it behind Dakota's fence or in his house or hidden under his bed or ... who knows where or what condition it is now. We hope it is still OK. We wonder if Dakota could have even buried it on Lassie's patio, as he is a frequent visitor. No evidence that Dakota was even involved or is a usual suspect.

A left turn off of the path would add hundreds of steps to visit Marshall D or Roxie. We are pretty sure that Roxie couldn't have taken it ... she's not on the path very often and we don't even remember if she's been on Lassie's patio, but we don't know where it was when it went missing ... much less when .. oh, so frustrating! MD is one of the most likely suspects, or even AJ .. but why would AJ want it???? Which reminds me, could AJ's grand dog, Chocolate, have pilfered it? He hasn't been here in a long time. No, he couldn't have done it, could he???? Sniff sniff sniff sniff ... Chocolate?

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Sniff sniff sniff sniff sniff sniff .. now there's a new smell under that bush near 420 ... must be Biggs Bunny ... haven't seen him in many a moon but he is surely a suspect. Biggs is here and gone in a flash, and usually at night, but could have snuck into Lassie's Patio .. very unlikely Biggs would have hopped through Lassie's doggie door day or night ... but we'll have to put Biggs on the possibility list. Lassie's white board sure is getting full, isn't it? Sniff sniff sniff ...



Is Lassie crazy for pursuing all of these leads? Why would such a cute pup put in such persistent effort into sniffing out this CRIME? Why is it so important to her to sniff out its location? Why why why? So many questions and so few answers.

Sniff sniff sniff... what clues do we have? Joey is Lassie's best friend and lives near Step 500 ... just look for an American flag. Joey is a major whiner and as cute as he could be. When Joey is spotted, Reggie will often let Lass off of the leash and Nan will release Joey to chase each other all around the mulberry bushes ... otherwise their leashes would just get all tangled up and wrapped around Nan's and Reggie's legs ... all fall down. Joey could've easily done it as he loves to visit Lassie on her patio. Would Joey want it? Even if he did, what would he do with it? Why would he deprive his best puppy friend of it? Sniff sniff sniff?

Puppy parades are often around 5 pm after the TV soap operas are over and the evening news begins. Puppy Parades are defined as three or more pups taking a wok wok wok together at the same time within 10 steps of each other. The pups really tend to ignore each other ... it's the dog walkers who socialize within 10 steps ... the dogs are too busy sniffing sniffing sniffing ... to find "it"? Could it have happened during a puppy parade ... or in a solo wok wok wok? Reggie often observed that sniffing puppy parts are normal for pups, but are totally totally embarrassing for their human walkers ... but so goes nature.

Teddy lives quietly next door to Kit Kat near Step 650. Teddy barks and Kit purrs ... until Lassie perks up to see this strange 4 pawed neighbor ... not a frequent stalker, but quite cute and docile. As Lassie approaches Kit, under Sheila's Smart Car he scampers. Maybe "it" is somewhere in the parking lot or on mounds of dirt where trees used to be.

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It was truly amazing to see those flying trees a month or two ago ... about the time when it disappeared. Even the tree stumps disappeared last month ... leaving piles of sawdust which morphed into piles of topsoil with tiny mushrooms growing on new hillocks. Could the flying trees have something to do with Lassie missing her prize?



She did notice Terry's mate laying eggs on Teddy's hillock. The eggs may now be gone. We are suspicious of Carney Crow or possibly one of his murder (a murder is a flock of crows, not the killing of these black and squawking creatures) recently seen attacking turtle nests. Lassie has recently been photographed observing Myrtle the Turtle laying her eggs near Step 650 or 700. We also highly suspect Carlyle Crow for snacking on Myrtle's baby eggs. Could she have also been Lassie's culprit? Highly likely! Highly unlikely that Zack could have done it since he never leaves his patio or house. Handsome Zack looks like a tiny white lamb, not keen of sight or sound, but his vocal cords are in great shape. No way he could have done it, is there? Around Step 0 are two birds nests up in the awning rollers, one with brown sparrows and the other with red finches. Lassie gets very upset when these four roller residents flutter around and tease her by trotting across the fence and roof tops. Lassie barks and races around her patio to chase those suspects out of her sight.

We also suspect there may be a Geico Gecko or two or three under the patio shrubs. Reggie doesn't see them very often but Lassie is keen on their trail every single day. Yep ... major heist suspects!

Dragon flies and box wings are frequent visitors around 792. Not likely suspects, but fun to watch. Step 6 is getting a LOT of Lassie attention today. ... no idea what could be that interesting... Geico?

"Go get your toy! Time for a wok wok wok!"

I know that's not Daisy sitting on her nest under the 700 Bush since she and her blue-headed mallard mate are swimming on the blue-green lake ... no ... they're under the spruce getting shade from the noon day sun. Lassie is just sitting there on the edge of the lake waiting for Reggie to click a "let's go". Myrtle just slid into the cool blue water. Too hot to even sniff.

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Weeping Willow 700 has D Duck (not Daisy) paddling underneath; cool shade on a steamy day. Could D have taken it, Lassie? Close enough to her patio but we don't see them up here that often, but we have seen mallards near our bushes ... so don't eliminate D and his mate from the list.

Who else do we need to add to the list? How about Rooney? Could she have taken it? Yes, I suppose so, but she is so young and gangly and wild. Her cousin Zeus is a candidate but he only visits infrequently. Could Zeus have moved his humongous bulldog body to abscond with it???? Let's leave Big Z on the list, just for slobbery giggles, OK?

Besides all the canines, felines, avions, hardbacks, insectoids, and creepy crawlers, could a humanoid have done it??? We suppose anything and anyone is possible ... right Lass? Lassie, do we need a bigger white board on which to scribble our notes?



What lies beneath the surface of Lassie's Little Lake (I told you that "klein" means "little" in Yiddish)? We haven't discussed that yet. We do know that it is more than 8 feet deep at some spots with steep drops from the shore. There are several large drainage pipes leading to the even larger City Lake where two or three cute brown River Otters sometimes use to visit Lassie's Lake. We don't know their names ... when we ask, they just dive under and stay there for two or three minutes at a time... very mysterious. Yep, prime culprit candidates! The fish in the lake are frequent victims of the otters, herons, cormorants, and little kids with fishing poles. They remind me of pirhanas. We throw bread into the water and they fight each other and the turtles for their treats, for our fun, and for our observations of nature. Lassie will sit still, just watching, and in hopes of snatching some crumbs of bread before the turtles come ashore to gobble their treats. Have I mentioned that Lassie will not get in the lake? Sometimes she'll get a toe or two damp by mistake, but only if she skids too far when chasing a turtle who has not yet scooted away, frightened by Lassie's shadow, or more often by Reggie's shadow.

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Lassie is a master stalker of feline proportions. Her favorite hobby is to stalk, chase, or just bark at turtles until they scoot into the lake. I still, after 5 years, have still not figured out Lassie's motivation or attraction for turtle STALKING. Stalking is an extremely slow and tedious and low slung exercise of an animal's hunting habit. She didn't need to learn stalking. She just started doing it. I wonder if the culprit stalked into the patio to steal Lassie's "thing", whatever "it" is.

Why is the lake blue-green??? Very mysterious, but probably has nothing to do with the disappearance. Let's put the color on our "parking lot" list of things we may explore in the future when we run out of other ideas for solving the disappearance.

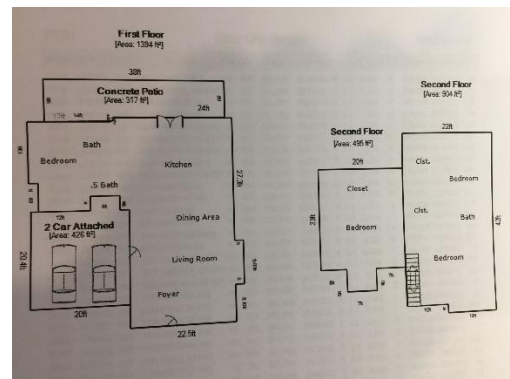
After big rains, the water level rises and during droughts the level drops ... another parking lot issue.

Tom Cruise has said that "every adventure is different" ... and that is the same for most of Lassie's wok wok woks. Sniff sniff sniff... stalk stalk stalk ... bark bark bark. Left or right, clockwise or counter-clockwise. Step #1 or #792 ... doesn't matter a whole lot to Lassie ... as long as she gets to sniff to her heart's content.

### CHAPTER TWO ... A MICROCOSM

Lassie's Lake Little is just a microcosm of the universe ... of Earth ... of Belmeade ... of Lassie's world. Our mystery exists in Lassie's world, because telling you about where it went would exceed our patience if we went much beyond Step 792. 792 is not Lassie's boundary since she is a traveler who loves to go on longer walks and to go bye bye in the car. Sajo Clinic is not her favorite, since a bath and grooming and even shots from her Veterinarian are often involved. But I digress. "It" must still be near 792, if it has not been carried off by a culprit with wings or legs ... we can pretty well exclude fish, worms and most insects, right? "It" had to have been taken from Lassie's patio or house, so the culprit must be either human, canine, avian, reptilian or even ... eek ... rodentian! We are narrowing down the possibilities, right? Not really.

Beyond 792 is another lake, woods around City Lake, and WALKING paths where bikes, skate boards, motorcycles and even skates are not allowed to tread according to THE RULES. Ah yes, THE RULES! But we'll get into that later ... let's focus on where "it" could have been taken off to, and not yet how or who or what or when or why. Let's, for now, limit our search to Belmeade, within, let's say, 2,000 or 3,000 steps of Step 1, OK? Focus, fellow sleuths!



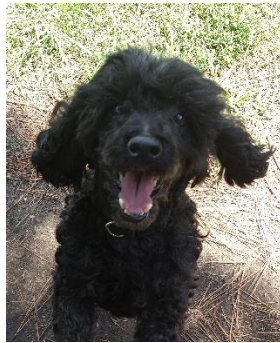


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Great News! Daisy D is a momma! 4 tiny ducklings are next to the shore near Step 700!!! How exciting!!! Careful, Lassie, don't get too close. We don't want to scare the babies, or Daisy. Remember that female ducks have brownish colored feathers and male mallards have bright blue and many other color feathers. I wonder where Poppa D is? I see Auntie D and Uncle D watching the babies, which are trying to hide under momma's belly ... oooh ... now they are in the lake swimming!!! Baby #1 tried to waddle up the steep 4 inch bank, but couldn't quite make it. So cute! Lassie is just sitting and watching as the tiny 4 nibble at the grass on the bank while they practice floating in the water. I hear the crows. Momma Mallard had better be ready to protect the kids! Hmmm, I wonder where Daisy's nest is exactly; probably within 25 steps of Step 1. Ideal culprit candidates. Not the babies of course, since they were only hatched a few days ago. Hmmm ... maybe it was Father or Mother Goose, not their babies??



By the way, here's Lassie's doggie mom (left), dad (middle), siblings, and her (right) at 5 weeks:



The culprit or culprits could be in Big City Lake now, having invaded Lassie's space to take it to their nest or bed or burrow. Big Lake is reallllly big compared to Lassie's Little Lake. (Did you know that "klein" means "little" in Yiddish?) Lassie's (human) great grandfather, Sidney, used to fish on Big City Lake; his ghost is often seen in morning fogs, popping a fly rod's string to catch a fish ghost nuzzling up to Muriel's (Lassie's human grandmother) ghost, who's ashes float by.

Lassie loves to visit Big Lake. She trots across wooden bridges, toenails clicking and nose sniffing almost every board. After racing down stone steps near the Gazebo, she'll tug at her leash to get to the pier to look for turtles, brothers and sisters of Little Lake turtles. She'll plop her butt down on the pier and sit patiently for minutes, sometimes 4 or five at a time, observing the turtles who may think they are going to be fed. This pier must be 3 or 4 thousand steps from Step 1, so the Gazebo Pier is the furthest border of Lassie's search for "it" ... sniff sniff sniff.

CHAPTER THREE ... THE ORDER OF THINGS

Reggie thinks that the thousands of shrubs, trees, flowers, frogs, geckos, rocks and goose poop along the way receive their fair share of sniffs; goose poop assures a tug on her leash. Returns from the Gazebo always result in Lassie lapping water from her kitchen water bowl ... and a long nap. Reggie uses a cup ... and then cuddles with Lassie on his lap for his own snooze.



Lassie must know where she left "it". She is such an orderly pup. When she passes her foo foo bowl, she may or not take a sniff. If she does take a sniff, she may give it a really close and deep sniff ... a passing glance kind of sniff. More often than not, her foof bowl stays full, which must have begun when she hated her foof, but now she eats Blue Buffalos. When she does decide to do more than just sniff, she'll very carefully select one tiny foof-nugget, carry it six steps to her mat next to her doggie bed, chew on it for a while or just bury it in the folds of her mat. Sooner or later, back to the bowl for some very loud crunching and a very empty bowl. Water goes all over the floor, Oy vey. Then out the doggie-door for who knows how many sniffs around the patio. A very orderly process, don't you think? But sniffing for what?

Lassie is of course not always orderly. Upon sniffing a particular point, she is just as likely to do an about face and continue sniffing in the opposite direction, following the scent of some unknown (to me) residue. Some may call this "chasing her tail" but I've never seen her actually do that to her fluffy tail. Such a cute tail on her 13.4 pound, 5+ year old body. She does love to walk with her cousins Mookie and Reesie, but they still haven't figured out who is the leader.



CHAPTER FOUR ... SNIFFING FOR WHAT?

Just had a thought ... Kinga could'a copped it! Kinga is Lassie's housekeeper who does a great job of cleaning Lassie's house and making her bed. Kinga has lots of pets; maybe she took it for her fish, before the blue heron had his big buffet from her f'n fish pond. Kinga is the possible culprit who recommended that Lassie may like Blue Buffalos, chock full of natural goodies.

So what are the possibilities for sniffdom? Is "it" something that Lassie had at one time, or she never had and is longing for? Is it Animal, Vegetable or Mineral? Whatever "it" is must be in the grass around Little Lake, right? According to my calculations, Lassie spends about 79.2% of her time during every one of her wok wok woks, sniffing for "it" in the deep grass. She sniffs deep into the grass, so she is SERIOUS about finding "it". If her cute brown nose was a vacuum cleaner, I would have to empty her bag about every 100 Steps, I'll bet. Speaking of a brown noser, she will do anything to get a deep hug, a "good girl", or a tummy rub; such a "female dog" (B-Word). (Did you know that "klein" means "little" in Yiddish? Thus, Lake Klein)



I doubt if "it" is a stick, a bone, a ball, a toy, a goose dropping, or even another animal's "marking scent" although she does usually over-mark every apparent liquid "mineral" deposit she finds with a lifted hind leg, instead of the usual female dog's squatting position. Vegetable includes grass and weeds, but there are zillions of blades of grass and types of weeds along 792's path. Animal? She's not the least bit interested in frogs unless they are hopping while she's sniffing... but geckos are definitely a possibility since she gets kinda serious on the patio where she spots Geico. What other animal could do that to a PUPPY'S TAIL ... A MYSTERY to her psyche? We're gonna have to really think about this. I'm voting for mineral, but only Lassie knows what "IT" is at this point of our official investigation.

CHAPTER FIVE ... SUB SURFACE???

Could scuba divers find it if it was hidden in Lake Klein? The challenge is a muddy bottom, brackish water, steep slopes. Who would want to mingle with the turtles, fish, and frogs ... a frogman or a frog woman? Hmmmm? Could be! Two scuba divers were just spotted in the lake (R even took pictures of them). They did not look like they were having a good time. They were feeling around the icky bottom mud and nasty leaves in the water under the weeping willow. They were not swimming. They were just squatting there, with their goggles on top of their heads. Wait a minute! Now only one diver is visible. The other one must have found it and gone under to get it, right? Could they have been hired to find "it"? Who would have hired them? What was that woman doing under the tree? So many questions... so few answers!



Anyway, the divers must have been looking for it, right? They were really close to Step 600 and Lassie started barking at them. Why would she bark at them unless they were close to finding it? Oh well, Lassie had some sniffing to do, so she couldn't hang around to find out ... maybe later... sniff sniff sniff ...

CHAPTER SIX ... SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF

Rob Harris wrote about why dogs sniff so much. He explored several reasons, including Being the Big Dog. Lassie is constantly reminded by the message on my puppy walking ball cap that "I" am the big dog ... oh, forgot, she can't read, nor does she care even a little bit.



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Lassie has an instinctual need to show dominance over other dogs. If she has to pee anyway, why not multitask and use that opportunity to position herself as the dog in charge? When she sniffs where another dog has had potty time, she is likely to pee in the same spot to mark it as her own. Lassie must, according to Mr. Harris, "keep in touch with her network of furry friends". Before she finds just the right potty spot, she sniff sniff sniffs to see who else has done some business nearby. Her klein brown nose is thought to be from 1,000 to 10,000 times more sensitive than mine. Smelling the markings of other dogs tells her which dogs have been there, their gender and whether they are young and healthy. Her nose is specially designed to gather and hold scent particles so she can find smells that are important to her survival, such as finding the markings of well-fed dogs. According to the Canine Training Center, Lassie has upwards of 220 million scent receptors compared to my estimated 5 million sniffers. I don't need all of them because I don't like most smells.



Adrienne Farricelli, a certified dog trainer, author of "Brain Training for Dogs", wrote about why dogs are so picky about where they Pee & Poop (P&P) and why they spend so much time sniffing out possible spots. They circle, sniffing before they finally pick the perfect spot. Lassie will finally squat, signaling that we can finally go home, especially on frigid winter days when it's pouring rain with 50 mile winds making my umbrella and her yellow raincoat useless gadgets.



Lassie deserves an applause or a standing ovation after going. All she has to do is squeeze and she's done. So what gives?

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I often use Facebook to leave a message for others to read. In Lassie's world, P&P is a less romantic way to communicate. "Lassie was here" is what she may be saying when she leaves some P&P in a strategic location. Blessed with more than 220 million olfactory receptors in their noses, other dogs will surely be interested in Lassie's daily headlines or pheromone. She can mark with P&P just to be noticed, and yes, it must also "smell right." Lassie may be also looking for some leftover scent of another dog so she can happily mark over it and leave her message: "I'm the big dog!"

### CHAPTER SEVEN ... UN-PEPPY PUPPY

Lassie has not been feeling great lately, I'm sad to say. According to Doc Sajo, a pooping goose has laid more than golden eggs. Lassie, in one of her sniffing excursions has done a little too much snuffing. A single cell parasite has attacked little Lassie and she is not her peppy little puppy self. A cure has been prescribed and the cure is on the way.

To be continued. I will add more mysterious adventures here to A PUPPY'S TAIL.

### CHAPTER LAST ... THE ANSWER: WHAT IS IT & WHO DONE IT

Well, folks, we've explored lots of culprit candidates and what "IT" is ... probably many more than you ever wanted to read about, so here it is: "IT" DEPENDS.

Lassie is a typical puppy who probably immediately forgets why she walked into a room or crawled under my bed ... but she is all about HAVING FUN ... and her fun usually depends on who she is with, where she is, and whether she has taken a nap recently. When we suggested Animal, Vegetable or Mineral. We probably missed including "fun"? Fun can be categorized as just "A GOOD TIME"

Would life be worth living if we didn't have a good time and enjoy what we are doing? Why and who would take having a good time away from Lassie? The answer is probably no one and nothing. "It" is not missing. "It" was not taken. "It" was there all the time. A GOOD TIME!

I hope you enjoyed reading this Puppy Tail! This story is dedicated to Lassie One, Lassie Two, Lassie Three, Lassie Two-Four Klein, Lassie Five Miles Klein, and to "Mamma" Jo Anne Klein.

