

JIM

THE WONDER DOG



CHAPTER TWO

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We dogs are a pretty smart bunch. We do lots of things for humans, not just hunt quail. We also herd sheep, pull sleds, find people who are lost or need help, guide the blind and assist the police and military. Everyone knows that dogs can be trained to perform a number of tasks. Why, even I can shake hands, sit, lie down, and catch a tennis ball with the best of them! But what my father, Jim, did was different.

The first time Sam realized that Jim was more than just the average bird dog, they were in the woods together. It was a warm, fall afternoon, and Sam was looking for a shady place to rest. The shade of a hickory tree is a fine place to enjoy an autumn afternoon.

Sam said, "Jim, let's find a hickory tree."

Sam was really just talking to himself. He didn't expect Jim to understand. But my father knew much more than any human had ever given him credit for!

As soon as Sam asked the question, Jim ran right over to a hickory tree and placed his front paw on it. He looked at his master as if to say "Here's one!" Of course, humans are a doubtful bunch, so, naturally Sam thought this had to be a coincidence. Nevertheless, it was pretty funny, so he thought he'd give Jim another try.

"Yes sir, Jim, that is a hickory," Sam said. "Now show me a black oak."



Sam was shocked when Jim calmly trotted over to another tree and placed his paw right on the trunk of a black oak. Once again, he looked to his owner as if to say, "Here's one!"

This time Sam got excited! It couldn't have been a coincidence! What were the chances his setter would be right twice in a row? Sam intended to find out. He asked Jim to find more trees and other plants.

"Walnut tree! Hazel bushes! Show me a stump!" he called out.

Again and again Jim placed his paw on the right object. Sam believed he had a miracle on his hands. The trouble was, who else would believe him?

When Sam returned home that evening, he recounted Jim's tale to his wife. She looked at him skeptically.

CLEVER HANS

Many animals are famous for showing unique intelligence. In the early 20th century, there lived a horse named Clever Hans. Hans was famous for being able to do math! His owner, Wilhelm Von Osten, could ask him "Hans, what is $45+11$?" and Hans would stomp his hoof 56 times. Hans was almost always right, and everyone believed that the horse could not only understand the German questions, but also solve math problems! Soon though, people realized that Hans often got problems wrong when the person asking him did not know the answer.

They learned that Hans actually did not know how to do math. He was picking up on subtle signs given by his questioners. For example, when Hans stomped his hoof and got closer and closer to the right answer, the people around him would get excited, communicating tension to the horse through their body language. When Hans stomped the correct number of times, this tension was released, so Hans knew that he should stop stomping. Pretty clever, but he wasn't doing any math. Horses communicate with each other through body language, so once Hans figured out how to read the humans, he could stomp away, getting questions right nearly every time!

Scientists decided to call undetected signs humans accidentally give off when communicating with animals the Clever Hans Effect after this horse.

Jim the Wonder Dog's observers designed clever evaluations to see if he was actually just responding to the Clever Hans Effect. Jim passed these tests with flying colors!

"It's alright to tell me this, Sam," she said. "As long as you don't tell anyone else."

She had reason to think her husband had lost his marbles. Humans have always questioned animal intelligence.

When Sam told his wife that their dog could understand English *and* identify trees, she thought her husband was either crazy or had been somehow tricked.

But doubt never stopped my father. Jim the Wonder Dog was just getting started.

PAPER TRAINING

Choose five headlines. Rewrite each as a complete sentence, using correct punctuation. Imagine Jim's special talents have been highlighted in a news story. What would the headline say?

Learning Standards: I can read historical fiction and make text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

