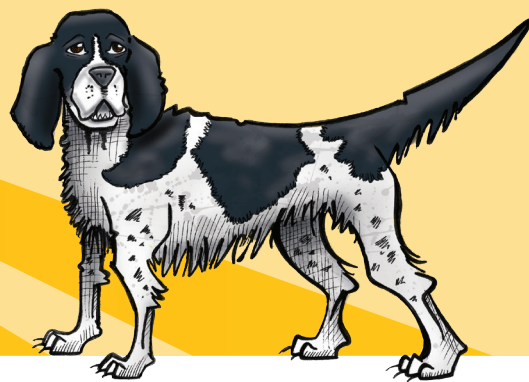


JIM

THE WONDER DOG



CHAPTER FOUR

Written by Carolyn Mueller

Illustrated by Christopher Grant

As Jim grew larger, he was determined to prove that he was more than an “ungainly pup.” His first test was an official hunting trial. All of the dogs trained at Ira Irvine’s kennels were given a trial. Their owners wanted to see if they’d be good enough to take into the field.

“If he doesn’t show any promise,” Sam told Ira, “I’ll have to get rid of him.”

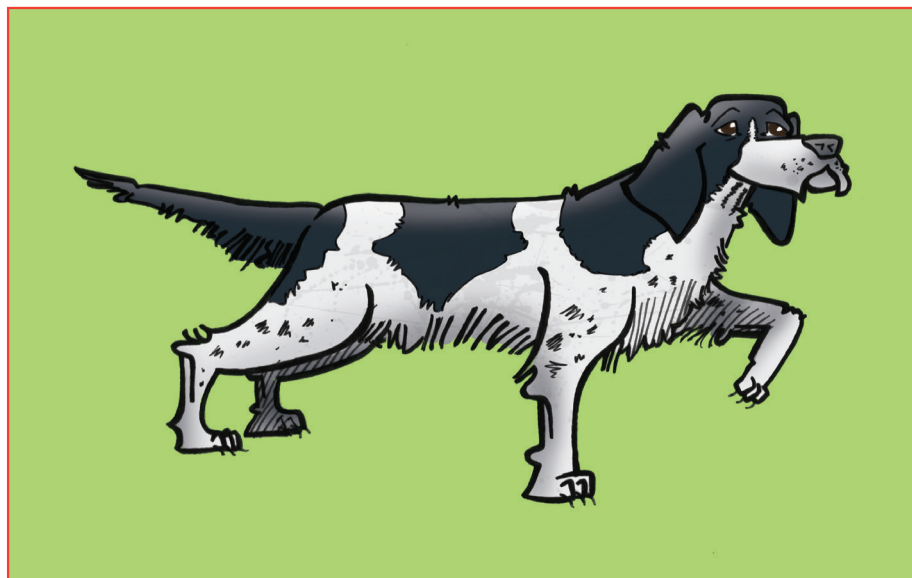
That was a lot of pressure on my father. He was still waiting to find his forever home, and he really didn’t want Sam to send him away. The two men took Jim out into the field for his first test. Immediately, Jim smelled quail.

Llewelin Setters, like me and my father, are bred to be natural hunters. We have a great sense of smell, and when we smell game we know how to pose in what’s called a “point” position.

It’s really quite easy. Give it a try! Nose forward, tail out, and front paw lifted and curled under. That’s how we show our owners where birds and other game are hiding.

When Jim smelled his first quail in the field he assumed a perfect point. When a bird flushed into flight, Sam shot it.

“Dead bird!” he shouted.



Jim trotted over, retrieved the bird and brought it straight back to Sam. Jim didn’t chew the bird or damage it at all. Jim was perfect!

“I didn’t think he’d do it!” Sam told Ira.

For the rest of the afternoon the two men hunted quail, and my father was their flawless companion. He broke the birds out of their coveys and retrieved them when necessary.

“Well, this is one dog I don’t think I’ll ever give away,” Sam told Ira at the end of the day.

And just like that my father had earned the trust and loyalty of his new owner. Jim had found his home.

Jim was a great hunting companion, but lots of dogs are, especially in my family. So what set him apart from just any old everyday setter?

Well, remember the day that Sam and Jim were hunting when Jim identified a number of different trees? Jim was more than just a great hunter. It seemed to Sam that when Jim hunted with him, he was not just following instinct or trained commands. No, it seemed that Jim understood in plain English what was being asked of him!

After that day in the forest, Sam was convinced that my father could understand language. Even though Sam’s wife doubted the story and told him to keep it to himself, Sam wanted to show his friends what his new hunting dog could do!

The day after Jim identified the trees, Sam took him to town. It was time for people to meet this Wonder Dog.

KOKO THE GORILLA

Another famous animal who appeared to understand human language was Koko, a female gorilla. Koko was born at the San Francisco Zoo, and she has been cared for her entire life by a researcher named Penny Patterson. Penny began teaching Koko sign language when she was just a baby and reportedly uses more than 1,000 signs and understands more than 2,000 English words. She once told Penny that she hoped to get a kitten for Christmas! Koko’s wish came true and she named her kitten “All Ball.”

Koko sometimes shares memories through sign language and even complimented another gorilla who was learning with Penny by signing the message “Good Sign.” But can Koko really understand human language or is she just really well trained, since she sometimes is given special treats for completing her signs?

People question if perhaps Koko is being influenced by the Clever Hans Effect. Maybe Penny is actually encouraging Koko to give certain signs through her body language. It’s hard to understand exactly what Koko does or does not know, but she’s definitely another interesting example of an animal communicating and appearing to understand human language.

PAPER TRAINING

Jim was skilled at communicating. Newspapers have many examples of communication that are intended to persuade, inform and entertain. Can you find an example of each?

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

