

# JIM THE WONDER DOG



## CHAPTER EIGHT

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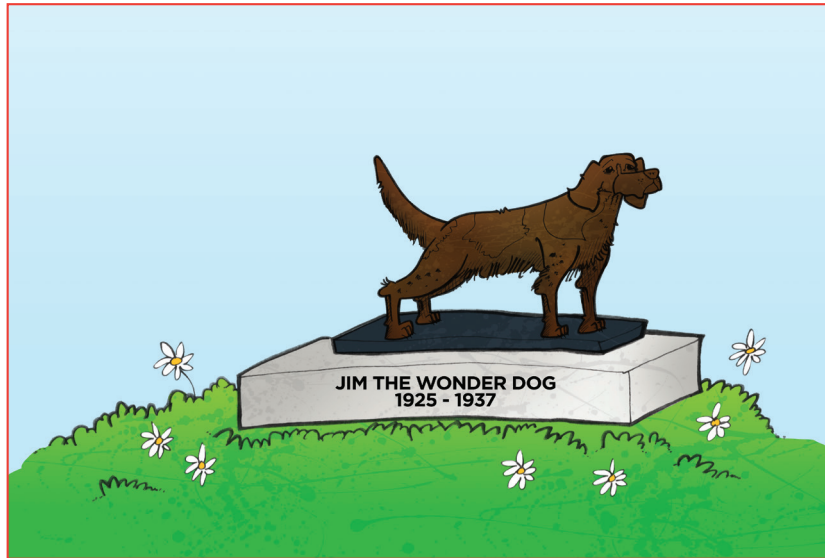
Illustrated by Christopher Grant

The Van Arsdale family has many fond memories of Jim the Wonder Dog. My brother, Son, and I have grown up hearing stories about our incredible father. Now that we're just a couple of old dogs ourselves, it's important for us to remember and pass on these true tales so that the legend of our father will never be forgotten.

The city of Marshall, where Jim lived at the Ruff Hotel, continues to celebrate Jim, helping his story to live on many years after his death. Jim's grave is in Ridge Park Cemetery. He is the only animal with the privilege of being buried there, and people routinely bring treats, dog toys, flowers and coins to honor him.

The Ruff Hotel is gone, but in its place lies a beautiful garden, built to honor my father. Visitors can stroll through quiet pathways lined with lovely flowers and bushes and read Jim's story on sign posts as they go. Every year in May, the city celebrates Wonder Dog Day to commemorate the legend of its "most famous citizen." Dogs come from near and far to participate in a doggie parade and a Frisbee contest! It's truly a special day celebrating the life of a very special dog.

One question remains to be answered, though. How did he do it? How did Jim understand humans so completely and thoroughly that he could complete any task asked of him, in



any language? How did he predict the future? How did he know how to identify all of those trees? Lots of scientists and inquiring minds have pondered over the years just exactly what animals know, and how they know it. People may never truly be able to understand the animal mind.

In his time, Jim was tested. Doubters tried to prove that he was actually just a trained dog, or responding to his owner's body language, or perhaps simply relying on dumb luck. But the truth is, no human could ever figure out exactly how my father did "his stuff." And no one ever will. Jim is a mystery to everyone, especially Sam.

Sam never tried to explain Jim. His powers were as peculiar to him as they were to any observer. The clumsy, runt of the litter had surpassed everyone's most basic expectations.

Jim changed Sam. Sam had been a man who believed that a dog was an animal with a job to do, put on this earth simply to help him hunt quail. Sam was always kind and gentle with animals, but in his eyes they were not family or even companions. Dogs were useful for hunting, and that was all that really mattered about them.

After Jim though, Sam changed. He saw that dogs might be capable of understanding and communicating in ways he never thought were possible. One look into Jim's eyes told people that these animals were made of something more. Sam began to appreciate each and every dog as a unique, intelligent being, an animal that could become not just a companion, but family.

That's how Sam treats me, of course. I may not have the powers

of my father, but I know that I am respected and loved.

Jim was only with us for 12 years, but in that time he made a huge impact on those around him. You know, I really think that dogs live such a short time for a reason. We don't need decades, like humans do, to figure everything out. We already know the best way to live. Never waste a day. Always be there for others. Always enjoy good food. Listen to those around you. There is nothing worth more than loyalty and love.

All dogs live as examples for our owners. But Jim went beyond just that. He listened and understood in a way that no dog could ever replicate. His incredible abilities helped to bridge a unique connection and an understanding between dog and human. Maybe no one will ever solve the mystery of his abilities. But we can look back, celebrate and appreciate him for who he was.

He was Jim. And he was a Wonder Dog.

### PAPER TRAINING

A garden was built to honor Jim the Wonder Dog. In what ways could a person be honored in a newspaper? Can you find an example of someone being honored?

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

