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# WEEKEND BREAK

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Ed Hunt photos

**LEFT:** When she was little, Grace Hunt was pretty obsessed with Lucky. **RIGHT:** Lucky and Grace Hunt. On hikes and rides, Lucky likes to ride in the backpack.

# MUST DOGS

As companions, they distill the emotion of love into its purest form

By **ED HUNT**  
 For *The Daily Astorian*

*"Dogs' lives are too short. Their only fault, really."*  
 — Agnes Sligh Turnbull

**S**ometimes I worry about Lucky. He sleeps late. He needs help coming down stairs, doesn't eat, spends the day curled up on the couch by the window, only occasionally looking out at the rain.

Other days he is up early, eats a big breakfast and runs around the house with boundless energy. He goes for long walks in the fields even in the pouring rain. Why waste a good day if only the weather is bad?



He does well for an old dog.

As far as we can tell, Lucky is 14. The first few years before we adopted him from Must Love Dogs NW were eventful.

The story we were told was that he was hit by a car and lost an eye. Without the eye, he failed to see a train coming and lost a leg and his tail.

Three legs, one eye and no tail. I like to say he's only three-quarters dog.

We were also told he was a street dog in Thailand, brought back to the U.S. by a veterinarian who met him on a medical mission trip. As one of the millions of so-called "soi dogs" he belonged to no one.

This myth of him starting life half a world away is such a bizarre origin story that it must be true. Moreover, it fits with his personality.

Like that Margaret Wise Brown book "Mister Dog," Lucky doesn't belong to us. He is the dog that belongs to himself. When he was younger, he would just hop in any car that happened to be passing by. He is happy to follow a stranger home if they smell good and might offer him food.

## A dog and his girl

No, we have never owned Lucky. But he has always owned the heart of my younger daughter, Grace.

Grace was 4 when we got him, and she was obsessed with him from the start. Her kindergarten teacher commented that he was all she ever talked about or drew pictures of. Over the years Grace and Lucky have appeared in so many pictures together that the Facebook algorithm automatically tags pictures of



**TOP:** Ed Hunt and Wendy down by Grays River. **ABOVE:** Lucky Hunt.

Grace as Lucky Hunt. They are, as best we can tell, the same age. Although her 14 years would be 98 to him. They have spent a decade together — she growing up, he growing old.

They have grown so close I fear the day when he is no longer.

But Lucky is a tough one. Untroubled by the injuries early in his life, he has always managed to run, jump and play. His left hind leg didn't heal right and only has two toes. On hard surfaces he just lifts that bad leg and runs on the two right legs. As old as he is, on a good

day he can still move pretty fast when he wants to. He still feels it is his job to protect his house.

When I am 98, I hope I am still able to walk out in the fields on rainy mornings, marking my territory so the coyotes don't dare come near.

Lucky was never much interested in other dogs. He prefers the company of cats. We don't judge. That's just how God made him. He loves playing with cats and would often wrestle with them in his younger days. A few years ago, we picked out two Siamese kittens from a neighbor, and Lucky promptly adopted them, letting them sleep in his bed and knead his fur. Today the cats are full grown and almost bigger than he is. He still grooms them when they come in from the rain.

## Wendy, the yellow Lab

The only dog I've ever seen Lucky play with is Wendy, a yellow Lab. She was just a puppy when she was given to my mom.

Somehow she latched onto me and decided I was her favorite person. When I would come to visit, I'd get her undivided attention. Once the girls went down to The Dalles to visit mom while I was working and Wendy sat staring at the door waiting for me to come in.

When mom retired to the beach, Wendy moved out to the farm to live with us and thrived in her farm-dog years. She sits on the porch and alerts us to anyone who comes down the driveway, and helps me work on the motorcycles by licking my face whenever I get near the ground. She is a great outfielder when we play catch. She loves chasing the dirt bikes in the field and walks by the river.

I assumed Labs are all born knowing how to swim. One time on the farm I threw a stick out in the water and Wendy hesitantly jumped in, and sunk like a stone. She didn't bob up dog paddling either. Instead she thrashed and staggered up on the riverbank, looking back at the water in horrified betrayal.

So I had to teach her to swim down at the covered bridge.

Lucky can swim, though with the one front leg he tends to list to the left. While I was giving Wendy lessons, Lucky spotted a critter darting into a hole on the opposite riverbank. He took off across the water after whatever-it-was and clambered up the bank and into the hole.

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