

# Chapter 19

## Leroy

*It is the heart always that sees, before the head can see.*

Thomas Carlyle

Sometimes we can never forget the first impression that a person makes on us. On the other hand, I know of cases where the opposite holds true, when the last impression is the one etched forever on our memory. With Leroy, it's both.

I had just finished doing another radio show in Las Vegas. Joyce, Ruthie and Sylvia had put together an impromptu party. It all felt like a holiday for our locals and new clients as well. Locals brought food, wine flowed and we were on a roll. I counted twenty people in the front room and kitchen. Then Leroy made his appearance. Seems the smell of all that food was more than he could take. I saw him first as he poked his head in the door.

Leroy, a big old black Labrador retriever, made quite an impression on those who saw him. Once you saw him, you knew that he had been a boss dog for a long time. But time had taken its toll. His tail still curved proudly over his back (the sign of a dominant dog), but arthritis in his back hips and legs caused him to almost pull himself by his front paws. When he stuck his head inside to check out the appetizing smells and other possibilities, he suddenly drew back because something outside had captured his attention. Sitting in my recliner, I had a clear view of what happened next.

He stood on the porch watching several local dogs following along behind a city dog that was in season. She was giving the local country boys a real thrill, but I could see Leroy making the scene in his imagination through memories of the alpha male that he had

once been. He glanced one more time wistfully at the scene before him, and turned to complete his entry into the kitchen.

I like dogs, but I loved Leroy, even though we hadn't been formally introduced. I was relaxed, and becoming more fascinated by Leroy with every wag of his tail. I sensed that Leroy had a plan. Old dogs remind me of old men. They're not smarter than the younger guys; they just know exactly what they can get away with in a given situation.

Leroy stood there letting folks pat him on the head and tell him what a good boy he was. His nose was in the air determining the location of everything of gustatory interest to him. He had no interest in the cake or potato salad. Beans didn't interest him. He was on the lookout for the hard stuff, the main line. He knew there were distractions with everyone talking and telling their clay stories. He again raised his head like a bird dog on point, when he caught the aroma and sight of a large slab of corned beef about to be served.

I thought, oh no! No Leroy, don't do it! He put his head close to the table, and pulled his backside along like a person with crutches will pull a lame leg along. He slowly scanned the room from side to side to see if the coast was clear, in the furtive manner of a bold bank robber. I was witnessing a full-blown robbery, but in this case it was a deft corned-beef heist in progress.

I thought, oh my God, he's going to do it! I thought for sure that someone would drag the booty away, out of his reach before he could make good on his intentions. But Leroy knew from experience that wasted motion could screw up a good plan. He drew closer, determined to complete the act. He looked around. Everyone stayed busy, blissfully unaware of his plan.

Now! He had one big paw on a chair, and in one black blur of motion, he was up and had the whole slab of meat in his mouth. No walking it outside for Leroy! No time! At that microsecond, he glanced at me watching him at work. He knew I knew.

Someone screamed, "That dog just ate the whole corned beef!"

All of it!"

A little old lady scolded him, "Bad dog!"

Leroy looked up at her as if to say, "So? It's all gone. No big deal. What are you going to do, put me in jail?"

She shook a finger close to his nose and repeated, "Bad dog!"

Leroy looked at me as if to say, "Give me a break," then he calmly dropped his big head, and began to pull himself outside. I loved it!

"What's his name?"

"Leroy. He's a hell of a dog, but he's about through now. They're going to put him to sleep soon."

I asked, "How old is he?"

"Thirteen years. He's had a long run. You should hear the stories that people tell about his escapades."

"I just saw one that tells me a lot. That dog's got more guts than a Chicago slaughterhouse."

Someone said, "Yeah, he's something."

He wasn't out the door yet, and I yelled across the room, "Leroy!" He turned to see who had called him in such a commanding fashion, and our eyes connected across the room. I had a glass of wine, and he had a stomach full of corned beef. Our cups were both full. He knew it was me and stopped in his tracks.

I said, "Leroy, come here." I waved him over to me. "Come on, pal. No problem. Let's get acquainted. Come on over."

He wanted to lie down. He was full, tired and he was sort of put off by the other dogs chasing his dream girl through the streets without his approval.

He slowly ambled over. He walked with his head down a little to show humility and respect, very important when you get older. It's more of an affirmation of values than a demonstration of surrender.

When he got close I said, "It *sure* is good to meet you. I've heard about you. Why don't we get to know each other?"

He sat close now. He looked at me with understanding in those

big, sad eyes, wagged his tail ever so slightly and laid that big head of his in my lap. I enjoyed it as one of those rare moments when two souls meet and realize that they love each other. Everyone in the room stood watching.

I leaned over, put my head down close to his and said, "I know you've been down many a road. You can stay here for as long as you want, and nobody is going to put you down next week."

He heaved a restful sigh. Labs have a trait of resting their heads on things. Yep, we just straight up loved each other.

I whispered when I told him, "Leroy, I've got a plan regarding that bad back and leg. It's arthritis, isn't it? I just wanted to meet you today. So get some rest, and tomorrow afternoon I'll get you started on some clay treatments."

I swear he understood every word I had said to him. I asked someone to bring me a bowl of water with a handful of clay in it. In just a minute, he had slurped up the clay water. I suggested that we put a spoonful of powdered clay in his food and water daily.

He went out on the porch and lay down, resting his head on his paws. His head came up in a hurry, though, when the city girl pranced by with her entourage in tow. They were getting busy. He was full and tired. He lay his big head back down, licked his lips and let out a big sigh. Memories would have to do for now.

The next day, Sunday, Leroy knew something was up. I started the day off by giving him a good, thorough bath with clay water. I towed him dry and let him in the house. I could tell he already felt better. He moved easier, faster, with less pain.

After a couple of hours, I covered his back and legs with the clay, making sure to surround the areas of discomfort really well. I knew one potential problem. The clay can be too cool if one is in the wind or a breeze. So, I made sure that he kept warm. Also, I knew that when the clay started to dry that the pulling effect, the tightening sensation, would drive him bonkers. It does that to people, and people at least know what's happening so they can mentally adjust.

Sure enough, what I was afraid of happened. The clay started to dry and pull, and Leroy began to go nuts. I grabbed him up, carried him to an outside shower, and we proceeded to shower together.

After a few minutes I let him out of the shower and a customer yelled out, "He's walking! Leroy's walking!!"

There he was, just walking along as if he'd never had a problem. Then everyone began to chant, "Le-Roy! Le-Roy! Le-Roy!"

What a wonderful moment! Glorious! Magnificent! Inspiring! We realized that we had witnessed a remarkable demonstration of what the legendary clay could do. I let Leroy off the leash, and he made the rounds taking the petting and choruses of good boy! Then he stopped. He stood absolutely still, with his head up and his tail curled high over his back.

Suddenly, he started running through the people on the patio, and straight down the road to where the city girl held court. Leroy was gone all day long. He lived to be almost fifteen years old.

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My editor was doubtful that one treatment on a dog's arthritic hip would achieve such remarkable results. Send us a before and after video when you prove it on your own animal.

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*Dear Lord, let me be as good as my dog thinks I am.*