

Submitted by: Edward G. Rice
9511 W. Waneta Lake Rd.
Hammondsport, NY 14840
(607) 292-6639

AKC Publications Fiction Contest
American Kennel Club
260 Maddison Ave.
NY, NY 10016

None Dare Call it Wolf

She has not eaten in a week; not gotten up on her own accord in two days. It was obvious that this third bout would not end with a bounce back to hopeful normalcy. The .22 revolver was on his hip, and her head rested on the thigh of his crossed legs. Although her deep blue eyes stared into his with life and loyal love her body had none left. (70)

For the first time in their life the distressing loss of a loyal friend was to be faced alone. There were no children looking on with hurt and anguish of their own. The lack in need for consolation of others caused the weight of sorrow to set more weighty than sand. The missing explanations of why this must be done now choked the heart with unworded sentence. She had crawled from her open pen to lay on the gentle slope of the front lawn and rest her head in her masters lap. Her eyes were locked on his tear stained face. The sun finally set. Darkness now surrounded them. Only the rising moon shed light enough to reveal that the holster was still snapped. He spread her wool blanket over them both in the chill of the evening. (138)

It was the autumn of the year when the new Pastor of the Baptist Church headed their car north towards Manitoba Canada. The missionary sent from their little Church in upstate New York had been laboring in Wabowden Manitoba for three years and Pastor Rice and his wife were excited to be headed deeper into Canada than they had ever been. Maps cluttered the space between them and excitement clouded the conversation. Although they were used to these long trips in their military life, this was a first in their pastorate and the first since their military retirement three years earlier. (101)

Wabowden, was an obscure little cottage town on Bowden Lake just off Setting Lake, in northern Manitoba. The new Baptist Church in town occupied the attention of both pastors but Pastor Rice was as much occupied by the rustic beauty found in such untamed wilderness. Driving through miles of this wilderness, broken only by the trading posts positioned on interconnected lakes and encountered in every two or three hours of driving, had exposed them to a whole new world of beauty and isolation. A pack of half wild dogs was found scavenging each trading post and in Wabowden there were three individual packs competing for attention and scraps of food scavenged from garbage cans. (115)

The preacher was enthralled about the social behavior of dogs for two reasons; since childhood he raised beagles and found a brace of beagles better hunters, and because Jesus warned Pastor's about wolves in sheep's clothing. So Baptist pastors, who have encountered such, are ready students of wolf packs. In daily walks around town the presence of these mongrel wolf packs was intriguing. The one pack that caught his undivided attention had an 120 pound malamute husky as its leader, and a perfectly marked wolf pup just beginning to run with the pack. (93)

Indian natives, called 'aboriginals' by PC Manitobians, would often shoot the village pack dogs which would interbreed with their domesticated dogs, as much as with the local wolf packs. The 'Indian' children would often capture and cruelly torture the pups before killing them. Each fall Canadian mounties would come through towns and trading posts and kill off all dog packs. Hungry dog packs had proven to be grave dangers to children when the winters turned the land frigid and barren. Wolf, the pup, was in the larger pack.. The preacher had convinced the missionary to help him capture the well marked wolf pup, and salvage him from a cruel fate. (110)

The packs were more skittish than aggressive. Stooping to pick up a stone would always scatter them in every direction. After two days of chase the mother husky and 3 month old pup were the more skittish. On the morning of the preachers scheduled departure for New York, a native boy had trapped the pup in

the crawl space under their modular double wide and with a collar and leash the preacher slipped through an opening in the skirting to capture the terrified puppy. (84)

It was no small task, and the preacher was crawling through more than dirt trying to capture the pup. When the young wolf dug a new exit under the skirting of the modular the missionary was there to slip a sled dog harness over his head and snug it up behind her front legs. All the noise and excitement, however, had brought the husky mother and huge malamute pack leader to watch and growl across the street from the struggling yipping pup. (82)

“Wherever you do, “ yelled the preacher from the tight dirty crawl space. “Don't let her go!” His hands and knees ached as his back banged against exposed joists which hung over his exit 20 feet away.

The dirt and, ... mud, .. that covered the once pressed dress pants could not detract from the smile on the man who now held the struggling wolf pup. Nor could the growls of the dispersing dog pack convince her release. Within 2 hours of her capture the distraught 3 month old wolf pup, born of the 80 pound mongreled husky was secured in a dog sled harness locked in the seat belt of a 92 Buick LaSaber's back seat. She was headed to the preachers upstate New York home, quite against her will. (133)

When a human takes a dog into their life there is a bond between man and animal that transcends all other such bonds. When that dog approaches the gene pool purity of a wolf that bond is pushed to a height that is unparalleled. When God brought to Noah two dogs to be saved on the Ark, saved with 8 human souls, saved from the world flood that swallowed all, those two dogs were wolf. From that pure gene pool came all the other dogs in existence today. Right up there close to the top is the Beagle. Way down at the bottom, somewhere below the Chihuahua you can even find a poodle like creature. The social, intelligent, intuitive characteristics of the pure bred wolf makes the bond it forms with a human transcends all other breeds. Wabowden Wolf, the malamute taken from the shores of Settling Lake in Manitoba Canada on that fall day, had all of that character. (159)

Wabowden, ripped from the social structure of a dog pack and inserted into the social structure of the Rice family induced a tremendous learning curve in both man and animal. The preacher had studied characteristics of submissive and dominance as they occur in wolf packs. Excessive military leadership training instilled a keen awareness of submission and dominance in his disciplined military environment. Extensive Bible training had taught the importance of submission and dominance in God's economy, especially as it unfolded in a Godly home and marriage. But the real, informative, and illustrative power of this relationship between submission and dominance came to vivid life when a wolf pup was brought into their home and completely thrust into a new but familiar social order. (123)

Since childhood the preacher had been involved with dog rearing, dog training, and dog breeding. Most of this involvement surrounded hunting beagles and this was his first endeavor with a large dog. Wabowden was smart, quick and loyal to a fault. A first failure in her strict obedience occurred when a raccoon ran across the road, through a ditch and under a farm fence. The preacher and wolf were on a three mile early morning jog. A single command of 'Halt' would always bring Wabowden to a tense but certain stand still. Not this morning. Not with a coon in flight. The wolf had already demonstrated its ability to instantly kill. Never in the presence of his dominating master, but if left alone with a ranging chicken it would be dead at her feet in only a heartbeat. Bounding over the ditch and through the fence brought the same fate to the young coon. After two stern 'Halt's she did stop and sit down, but it was after she had latched onto both shoulders of the creature, violently shook her head and tossed the dying creature four feet into the air. In less than 2 heartbeats she was standing over her prey, waiting for a new command from her master. The x-military preacher had never seen such efficiency in killing mixed with such loyalty of obedience. But he was compelled to explore it further. (234)

In order to stop such killings on neighborhood cats a new command was introduced, "Sick-um". Wabowden would not kill without the command,... at least not in the presence of his master. Probably

because its training was done with a stuffed animal in the front hallway, the command became more of a permission to chase than a command to kill. But whoda thunk Wolf could catch that rabbit before it left the yard for the thorn brush? All ate hasenpfeffer for supper that evening. The 'sickum' command still entailed permission to kill, but there was now situational perception about when it was really allowed or expected. Cats and chickens were perceived as off limits, ... except for the chase. (119)

Wabowden never missed opportunity to detect and keenly observed up close if possible, another animal, but there was never, from the day of her capture, a single aggression towards a human. There were times when just her looks discouraged hostile intent. She accompanied the preachers wife on long walks on the Finger Lakes trails. There was evidence that she might be an aggressive defender of her owners, but there was never an ounce of aggression focused away from the animal kingdom. (81)

Bowden's whole demeanor changed when grand children came to stay the night. Instead of sleeping at the foot of the bed Bow took a sentry position at the head of the hall. One morning while setting around coffee a tiny voice sounded from the hall "Excuse me," said Rebekah. A moment later she resounded, "Excuse me." When grandma peeked through the living room to see the scene the request was repeated, "Excuse me," was the same patient careful plea. There lay Bow, stretched across the hall, her chin on her paws, eyes looking up at Rebekah who had her arms full of toys expecting an entry into the living room. As large as them Wolf treated children with caring delicacy. (123)

A sometimes comical trait of wolves is their tendency to come up behind you and jab you in the butt with their snout. It is not really aggression, just a communication tool of sorts. It is comical because of the reactions it provokes; adult embarrassment, child glee. Wabowden always enjoyed the later. The preacher found the former revealing of personality traits. Wolf loved children around as much as grandparents do, and she would never be overwhelmed by the numbers. Contrare, she would wander

from room to room in search when the Rice pack reduced back down to two,... well three counting Wabowden. (102)

God created wolves to hunt in packs. They do. Wabowden was deprived of her pack and thrust into a social environment with humans. She still had hunt in her. She loved dusk, and the preacher would squint into the darkness trying to pick out her frozen grays as they blended into the forest twilight beside the house. It became her game to wait until his back was turned then to charge. It was easy to imagine the terror when the invisible gray shook the ground with bounds that sprang her toward him. Never from head on, Wolf would leap past at hip level with her shoulder just grazing against her master. It was awesome to behold and became more than Bowden's game. (122)

Gary was the preacher's ten year old nephew, who came under Wabowden's supervision one summer. The preacher's study overlooked a small park in Dresden. Gary at first 'had to' go to the office with his uncle, but thereafter insisted. He thought himself a Ninja Warrior, skilled in Karate. Bow was his able contender. The preacher never saw Gary land a blow, though his efforts were not restrained. Bowden intensified the game, her shoulder often connecting with enough force to knock the ten year old off his feet. Gary would spring back up swirl his hands and crouch slightly or raise his foot to knee height as the dog circled. It was not all such intense training but it went on for hours and produced enlightenment in uncle and nephew. (129)

Misty's stay was as intensive but not nearly as contentious. She was no warrior. At the top of the gene pool the wolf is a tracker, a retriever, a setter, a pointer and a show dog. They learn submission when dominated, not so much when not. Although Misty liked all Bow's character, it was the retriever that occupied her the most. Grandpa and grrandma would watch from the porch as their play turned into a game of tag. Wolf would grab a mouthful of long blond hair and they would run circle around the yard with Misty on leash. In all his life of beagles, spaniels, mutts, and dachshunds there never was

encountered a dog, yeah a wolf, with the character and temperament of Bowden. It was life changing companionship with a social creature captured in Wabowden Manitoba. (140)

Thirteen inch beagles, although crossbred for tracking qualities, are still high enough up the gene pool to have keen social sense and detect 'somber'. Sofie could detect it so strong that she drooped her tail and hung her head as she turned into the open gate of the wolf pen. Almost sulking she came to her master, curled in his cross legged lap and rested her chin on his thigh. The still unsettled but grown over mound beside the preacher rested his right elbow. His knee rested against a large flat field stone. The six foot high fence surrounding them was anchored in a concrete base. A small house called 'the den' lay on the other side of the mound. The beagle, rescued from a puppy mill and liberated into a whole new social environment two years earlier rolled her eyes up to her master. She was certain of his whole attention, certain she was the only dog in his life. She was wrong on both counts. The preacher reached over and dusted off the field stone. He had never carved stone before but this old hunk of granite was neatly scripted. Wolf Wabowden 1998-2010 A.D. (197)

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