

## Aubrey's Grandfather's Dog- © 2011 Richard W. Jennings

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

It's said by those in the know that Jack Russell Terriers never die of old age. They're too curious, too daring, too energetic and too independent to act like ordinary dogs.

So the day inevitably arrives when they find themselves in a jam they can't get out of.

That's what people say.

Jack Russell Terriers were bred by the Reverend John Russell in Devonshire, England, also known as Parson Russell, in order to improve his favorite sport of fox hunting. The world's first Jack Russell Terrier was named Trump. He was born in the mid-1800's.

Aubrey's grandfather's dog was named Eddie. He was born in 2002.

Aubrey named him after a Jack Russell Terrier, also called Eddie, that she frequently saw on a popular TV comedy. Aubrey's Grandfather's Eddie was only five weeks old at the time her Grandfather got him, hardly old enough to leave his mother's side, but being a Jack Russell Terrier - that is, very smart - he was already eating regular dog food from Doctors Foster and Smith pet supplies and on the lookout for treats.

Aubrey helped her Grandfather housetrain Eddie. This didn't take very long. The only thing smarter than a JRT is probably an octopus, although no one's ever tried to housetrain an octopus for a variety of sensible reasons.

Aubrey, the smallest child in the fifth grade read many books. One book she read was about beagles. Why? Because until Parson Russell invented JRTs beagles were the only dogs allowed in the foxhunt. This presented a serious problem. First of all, while devoted dogs, the truth is a typical noisy beagle is no smarter than B'rer Bear, whereas B'rer Fox is famously clever and canny with the ability to dive into the nearby hole of B'rer Rabbit until the fox hunters with their eager beagles have passed.

Not to mention that beagles are too fat to fit into a rabbit hole even if they ever thought of trying.

Ah, but the Jack Russell Terrier is a creature of divine perfection (according to one English clergyman).

A small, lean dog with a bobbed tail, fearless about diving underground, possessing sharp teeth that can clamp onto a cowering fox's hindquarters without letting go until the red-coated hunters arrive, where they reach into the hole, and, grabbing the JRT's bobbed tail like a handle, extract dog and fox in one dangling, snarling sign of success, after which they head for the hunting lodge for pancakes, maple syrup, fried eggs, warm hash browns, crisp bacon and, for some peculiar reason, pickled herring.

As happens in almost every family, the day arrived when Aubrey's Grandfather moved away to a warmer climate. Of course, he took Eddie with him. Aubrey was saddened on two accounts. She was no longer able to see her Grandfather every day and no longer able to be with Eddie.

Sniff!

Everything keeps changing all the time.

Eddie loved living by the beach in South Florida. He played in the waves, rolled in the surf and bobbed like a lobster fisherman's buoy in the incoming tide. He ran as fast as a rocket ship across the hard, damp sand while barking loudly at seagulls and pelicans and the occasional heron.

Over time, Eddie made friends with dozens of other dogs (and people) and introduced Aubrey's

Grandfather to many new people, dog owners and dog lovers aged from eighteen to eighty-eight.

It was the best of times.

Aubrey's Grandfather sent Aubrey a letter or a postcard every day. In some he talked about Eddie and all that Eddie was learning. In others he spoke of the dangers of alligators, the troubles of manatees, the plight of Loggerhead turtles or the beautiful grace of schools of jellyfish.

In some he simply said, "I miss you. Love, Grandpa."

But everything keeps changing all the time.

This time the change was named Frances.

The year was 2004.

Eddie was not quite two years old.

Frances was the first hurricane to strike Palm Beach County in twenty-five years. Deviously, and promptly, the fierce storm made up for lost time.

Waiting for everyone to go to bed, Frances made landfall at eleven p.m. Then she remained in place like an idling school bus for twenty-six relentless hours, churning away at Aubrey's Grandfather's neighborhood, among many others, apparently prepared to grind and groan as long as it took to make it into the world's weather record books.

Frances's eye pulsated like a beating heart measuring back and forth between fifty and seventy miles wide. In her entirety, this dreadful Category Three storm measured four hundred miles in diameter.

She was truly a monster.

Just the sort of thing that would make a Jack Russell Terrier curious.

"Eddie, no!" shouted Aubrey's grandfather, but Eddie had already exited through the patio door smashed into smithereens by a flying palm tree.

So much to see.

So much to learn.

How can a little dog less than two years old, raised in the upper Middle West, be expected to know the dangers of a nasty Caribbean hurricane? To Eddie this was one more grand adventure.

As far as Aubrey's Grandfather knew, most likely it was his last.

He may have wound up anywhere. Carried out to sea. Dropped off in Disney World. In some little kid's back yard. Or in a swamp filled with alligators.

But he didn't. He must have flown like Toto in the Wizard of Oz, an exciting journey for such a feisty young animal always in search of adventure, for although he never made it home and his collar was lost during the storm making it nearly impossible for someone to find Eddie's owner, a little girl named Tammi miles and miles away near St. Augustine, Florida spotted Eddie standing astride the back of an inbound Loggerhead turtle as it made its way to her stretch of beach. As the Loggerhead got close to the shore Eddie jumped off calm as you please, and barked at Tammi as if to say, "Take me home please!" which she did, as the Loggerhead swam back out to sea looking for another fare from the hurricane one would suppose.

Tammi and her Mom looked for Eddie's owner and even put an ad in the local paper, but alas since Aubrey's Grandfather lived so far away, he never knew of the ad. So Tammi took Eddie in and loved him as her own.

Aubrey's Grandfather, though, spent the next three days in tears. Aubrey, too, cried her heart out. It was a sad and sudden end to a delightful beginning.

Then the shortest kid in the fifth grade had an inspired idea.

She telephoned the breeder from whom her Grandfather had bought Eddie, a kind and caring woman ironically named Frances.

Frances asked for Aubrey's Grandfather's address in South Florida.

"Don't worry about a thing," she said to Aubrey. "I know just what to do."

So it came to pass that two days later a FedEx overnight delivery truck showed up at Aubrey's Grandfather's door bright and early. Aubrey's Grandfather was still in his tattered bathrobe, still sipping his first cup of coffee and cooking his breakfast when a woman in a FedEx uniform rang his doorbell.

She was patient as the sad old man shuffled to the door and she smiled broadly when she placed a special carton in the old man's scrawny, liver-spotted arms.

"Have a nice day," she told him. "In fact, have a happy life."

Inside the box was a hungry six-week-old Jack Russell Terrier, Eddie's second cousin, who bounded out, sniffed Aubrey's Grandfather's feet, and went in search of food that today was sizzling sausage links and warm scrambled eggs.

Once the little dog's tummy was full, and he'd had a bowlful of cool fresh water, he climbed into Aubrey's Grandfather's lap and licked the tears of joy from the old man's face.

According to his nametag the rambunctious little fellow was called Squirt, a name that proved quite appropriate as he explored Aubrey's Grandfather's house.

Everything keeps changing all the time. Sometimes it's good, sometimes not. But one thing is absolutely certain.

Life goes on.

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