



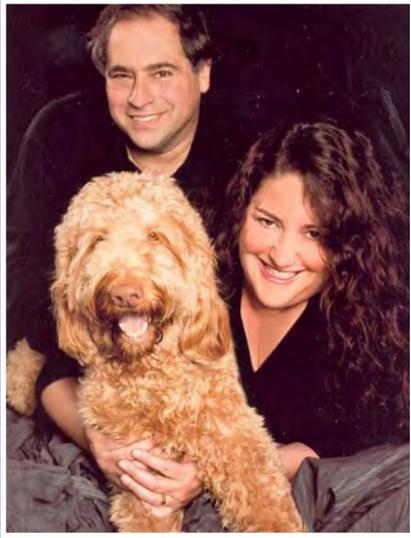
The Story of Tevi
A Celebration of Life



The Story of Tevi – A Celebration of Life

by Susan Berger and Bob Brown

Our Life with Tevi



Tevi lit up our lives for eleven years. He brought smiles to our faces even when the world did not.

Our love for Tevi was unconditional, as was his love for us.

Tevi had a particular love for children. He could tell that they were even more special than the other humans in his life.

Occasionally, a child who was afraid of dogs would visit us. Try as he or she might, the child typically just couldn't find confirmation of these fears

in Tevi's smiling face and wagging tail. Dr. Tevi 's clinic became popular with parents seeking his special cure!

Just as Tevi could tell that children were special, children in our neighborhood soon learned that Tevi was special. Many of them had regular conversations with Tevi. One day a little girl asked Bob to bring Tevi over, saying "I have something to tell him."

Tevi was so gentle that even the squirrels in our neighborhood showed no fear of him.



Tevi always wanted to please us. That was good, since we were not good trainers. Before telling Tevi "no," Bob would preface the discipline by saying, "Tevi, I have something to tell you that you may not like."

Tevi's most impressive act of self-training came at bath time. Tevi didn't like baths. When he was in the bathtub, he was always anxious to get out.

But we learned that all we had to do was mention that it was time to take a bath, and Tevi would stop whatever he was doing, go down the stairs if we were



upstairs, walk himself into the bathroom and climb right into the tub!

Tevi had a sense of humor. When Bob was sitting in his "big chair," Tevi would walk over and give a bark. Bob would ask, "Tevi, do

you need to go out?" or "Tevi, do you need water?" Tevi would bark again, causing Bob to walk to Tevi's water bowl or to the front door.

Without hesitation, Tevi would jump up in Bob's



ended, Tevi would jump up on the couch for his cuddle time with Susan, pleased that we had learned our parts!

Dog toys were not Tevi's favorite play things. (After all, they were for dogs!) When we'd play outside in the snow, Tevi's toy of choice was our gloves, those that we were wearing. When he succeeded in pulling one off, he'd race off to the corner of the yard to guard his new treasure!

In the house, where there were no gloves to steal, socks became the toy of choice. Tevi's favorite venue for this game was the bed, where he would gently remove a sock from Bob's foot!

chair, looking very smug, and wait there until Bob returned with a treat. Tevi would then jump down and return the chair to Bob! Mission accomplished!

We never told Tevi that Bob was his playmate and Susan was his cuddler, but

Tevi quickly assigned us those roles in his home theater (aka, our family room). In the nightly drama, Bob was the recipient of toys thrown and retrieved repeatedly until one of the players tired of the game.

When the game finally

Not wanting to exclude Susan from the fun even when she was not wearing socks, Tevi would very quietly slide a scrunchie off of Susan's hair and jump off the bed with his prize!

Tevi was very cautious. He had his own rules, like the not-going-under-tables rule. If his ball rolled under the table, it was gone!

Although Tevi liked going places where he would see people – even when that place was the vet's office – he didn't like the car trip. He never accepted our judgment that rolling down the road on a moving couch was safe!

Patience was one of Tevi's many good qualities, but



there were times when he just couldn't understand our procrastination. One of these times was on Saturday mornings, when we would go to one of his favorite places, the Shaker Square farmers market.

Often Bob would be on the first floor, getting

ready to go, while Susan was still upstairs. Sensing that Tevi knew something was up, Bob would tell him that we were going somewhere, but that we had to wait for Susan. Tevi would race up the stairs, find Susan and bark at her pleadingly, until she



came downstairs to make the trip.

We admit that we were one of those families who treated their dog as a person. When Tevi did something particularly human, Bob would say, "He's such a person!" Susan's standard response

soon became, "No, he's better than a person!"

It wasn't our fault entirely, though. Tevi made it hard to accept his non-human status. For example, whenever we took him to a store or a vet's office, Tevi would promptly stand up, put his front paws on

the counter and wait for service, just like any other customer! Dogs didn't do this!

We initially thought we wouldn't allow a dog to sleep in our bed. That commitment lasted not even a week. As he got older and shared our bed, we were humored by how respectful he was. He'd wait until we were each in our comfortable places and then he'd make his space at the bottom of the bed.

But, in the middle of the night, if Bob would go to the bathroom, Tevi quickly claimed Bob's space resting his head on the pillow. Bob often acquiesced and went to sleep in a guest bedroom.

Walking Tevi was always an adventure. Many dogs are playful on their walks, but Tevi liked to make up his own games. His favorite one was the acorn game, where he'd pick up an acorn, toss it with his head and then pounce on it.

He'd repeat this throughout our walk, always needing to find his acorn, even when it landed in a pile of perfectly good acorns! When acorns were not in season, Tevi would sometimes settle for an ornamental stone from a neighbor's treelawn.

But whether his find was an acorn or a stone, Tevi's goal was to keep retrieving



it until we made it home. After learning that these treasures were not allowed in our house, Tevi took to dropping them on our front porch before entering the house. Soon our front porch featured the neighborhood's largest display of acorns and stones!

As if these games were not enough, Tevi learned another trick to lengthen the time of our walks. Apparently, he had joined a union, because as we drew closer to our house, he would often go on strike! He'd pick a particularly comfortable lawn and lie down on the



grass. When we'd give him a seemingly simple command like, "Tevi, let's go," he'd translate that to, "Tevi, roll over and relax!" He seemed particularly pleased with himself in these moments.

Tevi became the organizing principle of our days. He governed when we woke up and what we did first, where we went – as when we could bring him it was always better – and how our days ended, with his sweet, fluffy self curling into our bodies so

that he could feel the warmth.

On our last evening with Tevi, Hope and Susan were talking about the places you'd find Tevi's picture in the dictionary. They agreed it would be next to the words awesome and fluffy. Susan then suggested the word love, to which Hope added, loved.

Tevi was so well loved - by us and all and who shared him. Just imagine the kind of world this would be if everyone loved and was loved as Tevi.

We continue to reflect on all we learned from him. To be present in each moment. To release joy. To love unabashedly.

Sharing our Tevi stories – like the way he directed our walks, how he loved people, his extensive vocabulary, and the games he created – helps us keep his beautiful light shining.

While our sadness runs deep, it is no match for the joy and love Tevi added to our world. We are forever grateful for this sweet being's presence in our lives.



A Puppy!

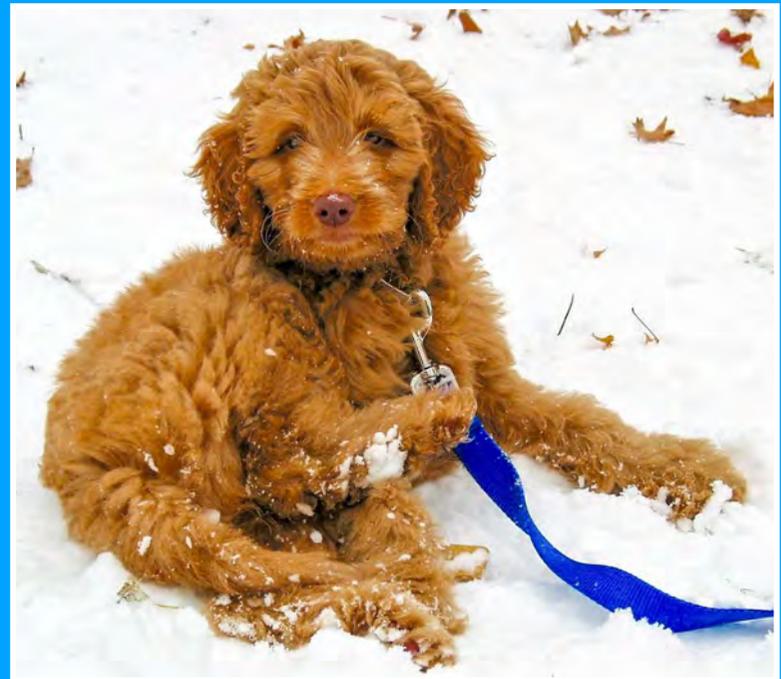
When we decided to bring a dog into our lives, we looked for a breed that would not aggravate Susan's allergies, so that she could breathe, and that would be gentle with Bob's grandchildren, who were unaccustomed to being around dogs. A labradoodle seemed to be a great choice.

Susan found a breeder in Austin, Texas – Dixie of Dixie's Doodles – who understood our needs and who had a litter coming soon. We were fifth on the list for that litter. On September 20, 2005, seven extremely cute puppies were born.

Dixie felt that the gentlest, most intuitive puppy was the one she called Rosy-Nosed Boy, earning that name as he was the only one with a light-colored nose. Lucky for us, he was still available.

He flew home to us on November 22, greeted by an early snow. We feared that our Austin-born dog would hate the snow, but he loved it.

We wanted to name our puppy after a character in *Fiddler on the Roof* – Golde for a girl and Tevye for a boy. So, Tevye it was!





Tevi bonded quickly. In those first days, he spent many hours being held by Bob. Zachary was the first child he met, and he clung closely to Joanie, perhaps knowing his friend Hope was there growing inside. He quickly identified Jacob as his running buddy and Noah as the guy he wanted to lick!

Tevi came to us from Dixie of Dixie's Doodles, with a little stuffed animal that lasted nearly 10 years. We figured that it might have sentimental value to our little friend. The truth is that it probably had more sentimental value to us than to him.

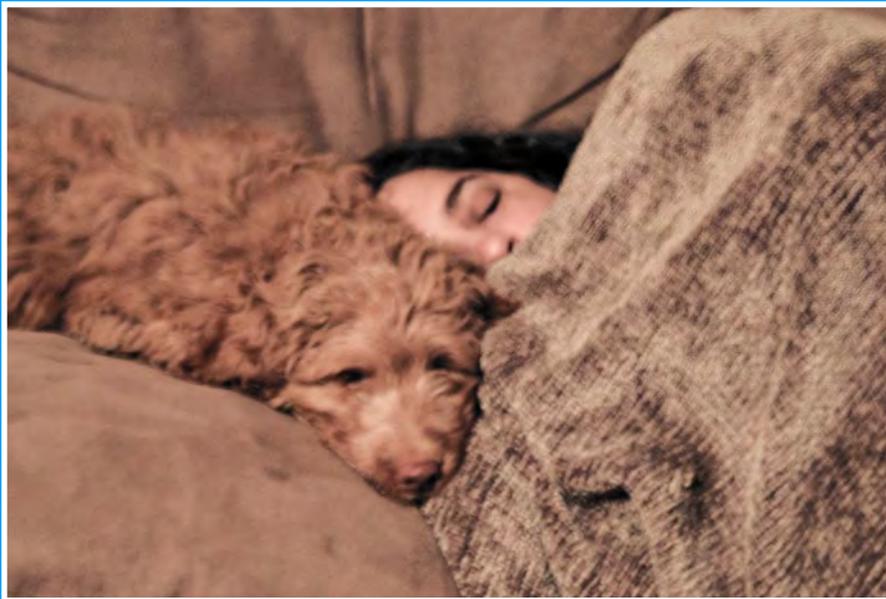


Little Tevi lying next to a half-eaten meal proved to be an accurate indication of his attitude toward food. Getting him to eat was always a bit of a negotiation!





One of Tevi's first gifts was this monogrammed snow jacket from Gila, Rachel, Elana, and their families. It was perfect since snow was a big part of his life in his first few Cleveland months.



He loved to snuggle and would find a way to go face to face with Susan when she fell asleep on the couch.

Family Guy

Tevi quickly became a popular member of our extended family. In fact, on our trips to the east coast to visit children, grandchildren, nephews and a niece, we soon realized that Tevi was the most popular member of our household! We didn't mind taking a back seat to our furry family member.

Although we knew that Tevi was a gentle dog, it wasn't until we watched little children yank on his fur that we realized how a dog could give new meaning to the phrase "turning the other cheek!"



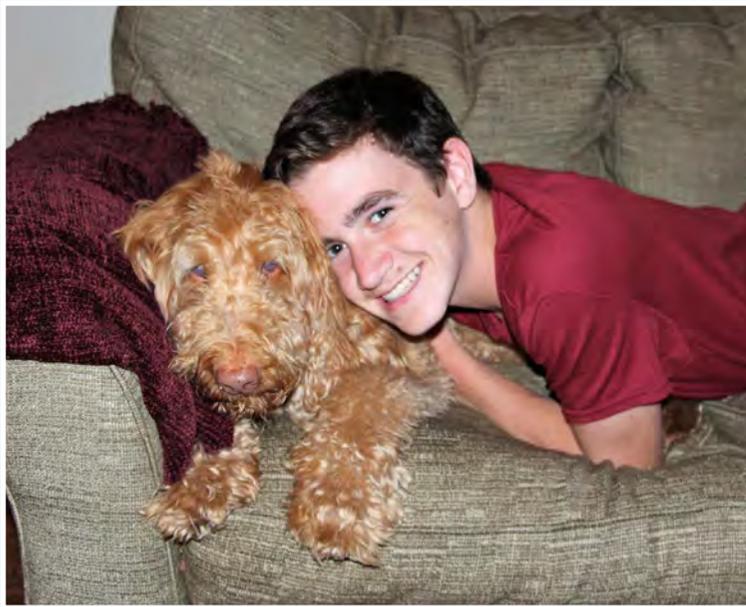


2014











Tevi showed a special kind of glee when Mom Mom came to visit. He knew the rules for her were different and he never would jump on her. But he never did stop trying to kiss her!



His Aunt Joanie was another of his favorites and he loved the ways she took such great care of him when Susan and Bob were out of town.



Tevi loved his Aunt Margaret and appreciated that at least one family member shared his coloring.



*Tevi loved when his Aunt Wendy and Uncle Jim came to visit.
He could tell that they were dog people!*



Grandpa was a favorite visitor and one of the few who allowed Tevi to slobber his face.



It was just like a "day in the park" for Tevi and crew when we visited the Nussbaum family in Lakewood, NJ in 2014.



How we managed to fit five people and one dog in a queen bed, we'll never know!

One-on-One

One of Tevi's favorite words was company. We learned never to use the word until the company was ready to arrive. Otherwise, he'd start looking out the window and barking until his guests arrived.

As the house filled with guests, Tevi would start working the room and networking until he was exhausted (socially) and went to one of his couches to rest.

As much as Tevi liked these big events, he most enjoyed his one-on-one time with family and friends, particularly children!









Mr. Tevi's Neighborhood

After leaving Texas at age 10 (weeks), Tevi spent the rest of his life at 2903 Hampshire Road in the Coventry Village neighborhood of Cleveland Heights. Although we took care to familiarize him with the neighborhood, we soon learned that it was Tevi who was familiarizing us with our neighborhood.

Our walks were quite entertaining, as he insisted on criss-crossing the street when he saw friends to greet.

He connected us with people we may never have known, as well as with their dogs and cats. We became known to many neighbors, not by our names, but as the people who belonged to that smiley labradoodle named Tevi!



Talya at Coventry Cats was one of Tevi's absolute favorite people as you can see!

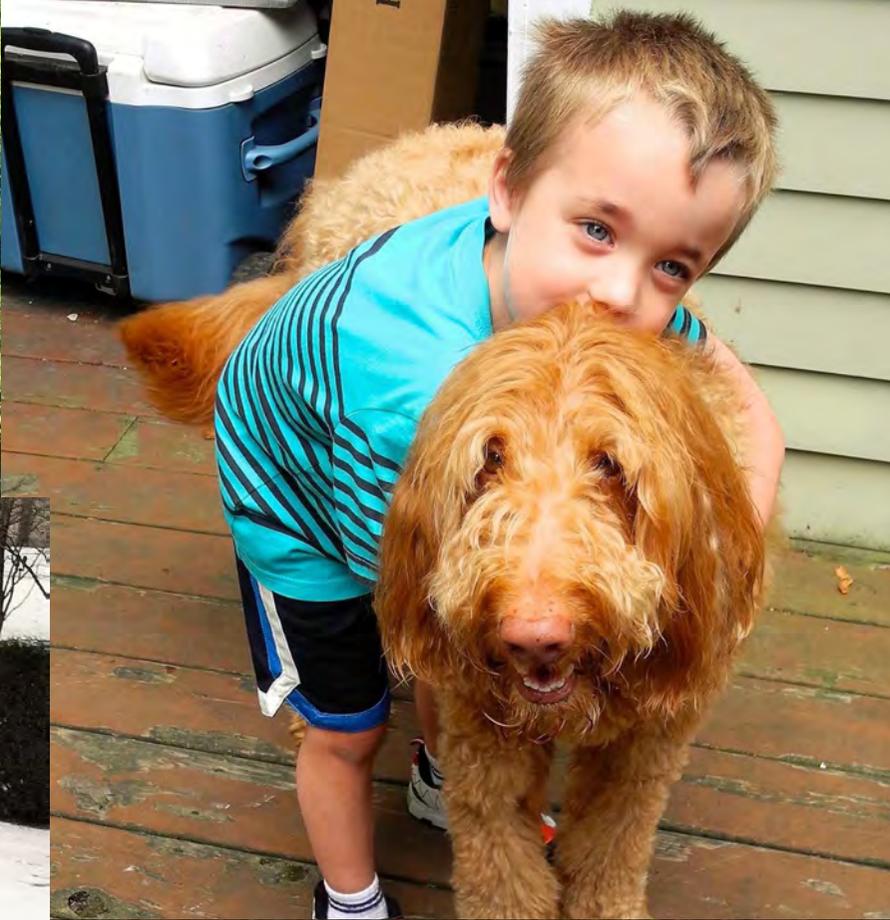


Laura was Tevi's frequent dog walker.



He loved the neighborhood kids!





Animals

Some dogs are jealous of other dogs. Some dogs chase cats. Many chase squirrels and rabbits. Tevi never understood these behaviors.

When another dog chased a squirrel up a tree, Tevi would look quizzically, wondering why the dog didn't know that squirrels don't play with dogs. When we walked Tevi, the squirrels on our lawn saw that the dog was Tevi and just continued with whatever they were doing.

When a dog came to visit and went to eat Tevi's food, that was fine with him. When the dog was smaller, Tevi would lie down to make himself small so that the smaller dog would play with him.

And then there was Simba, an outdoor cat that hunted birds and terrorized dogs but liked people. Simba learned that he could come to Bob for petting, with Tevi on the leash just a few feet away.

Tevi was always happy to share us with his friends. He knew that he was our true love!





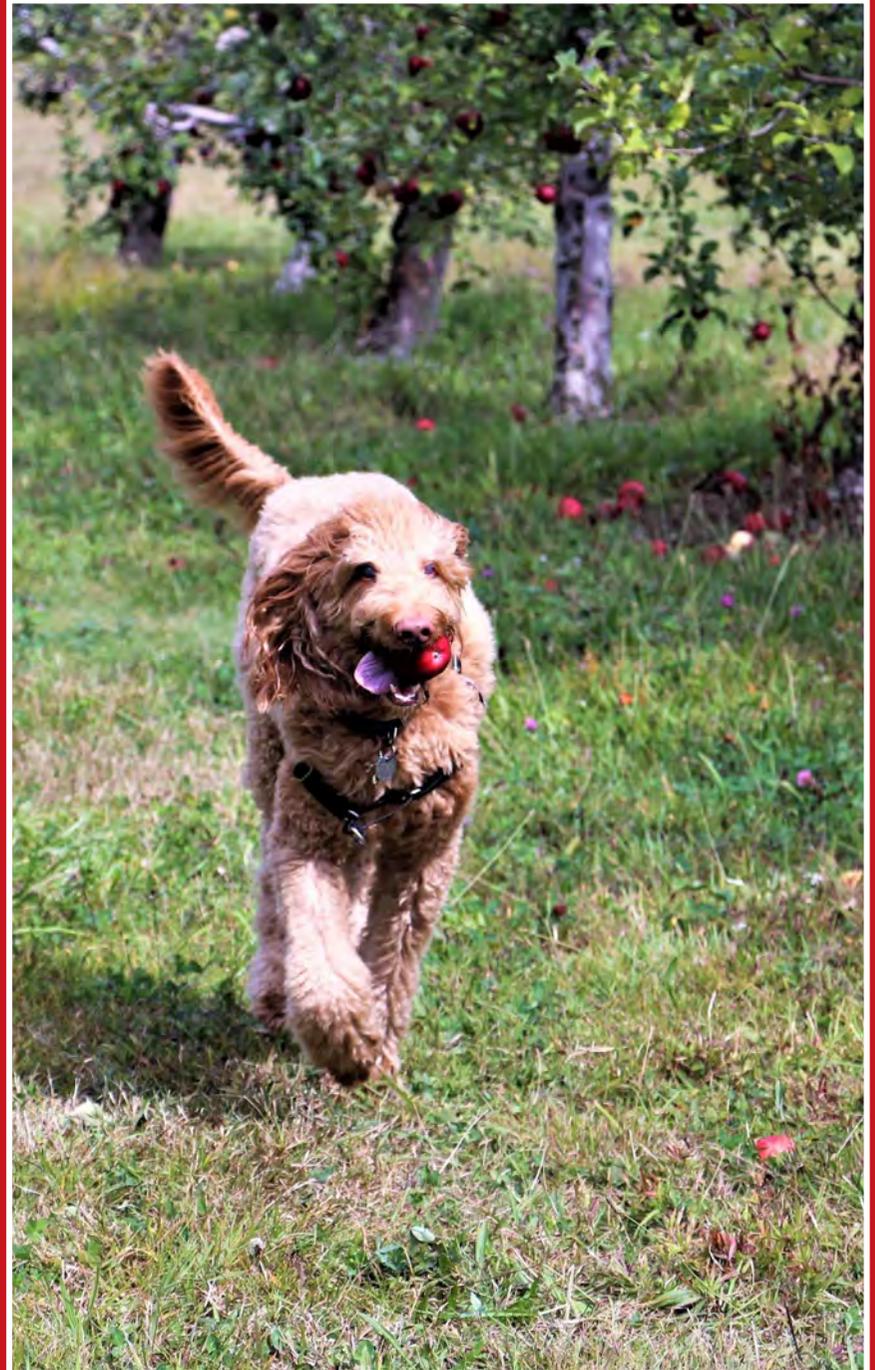
Apple Picking

Every year we took Tevi to Edy's Fruit Farm to "pick apples." Well, to be more precise, we picked the apples while Tevi ran down each aisle, picked up a fallen apple in his mouth, tossed it with his head, chased it...and then started over again.

There was no place that he was more joyful! What could be better than playing with a ball that tasted good too! An added bonus is that there were always children for him to meet and greet.

Since Tevi was born in the fall, we often took him apple picking for his birthday. We assumed that all people celebrate their dog's birthday.

If indeed there is a heaven, we hope that there's an apple orchard, and that our sweet guy is romping his way through it, surrounded by so many other loving spirits.









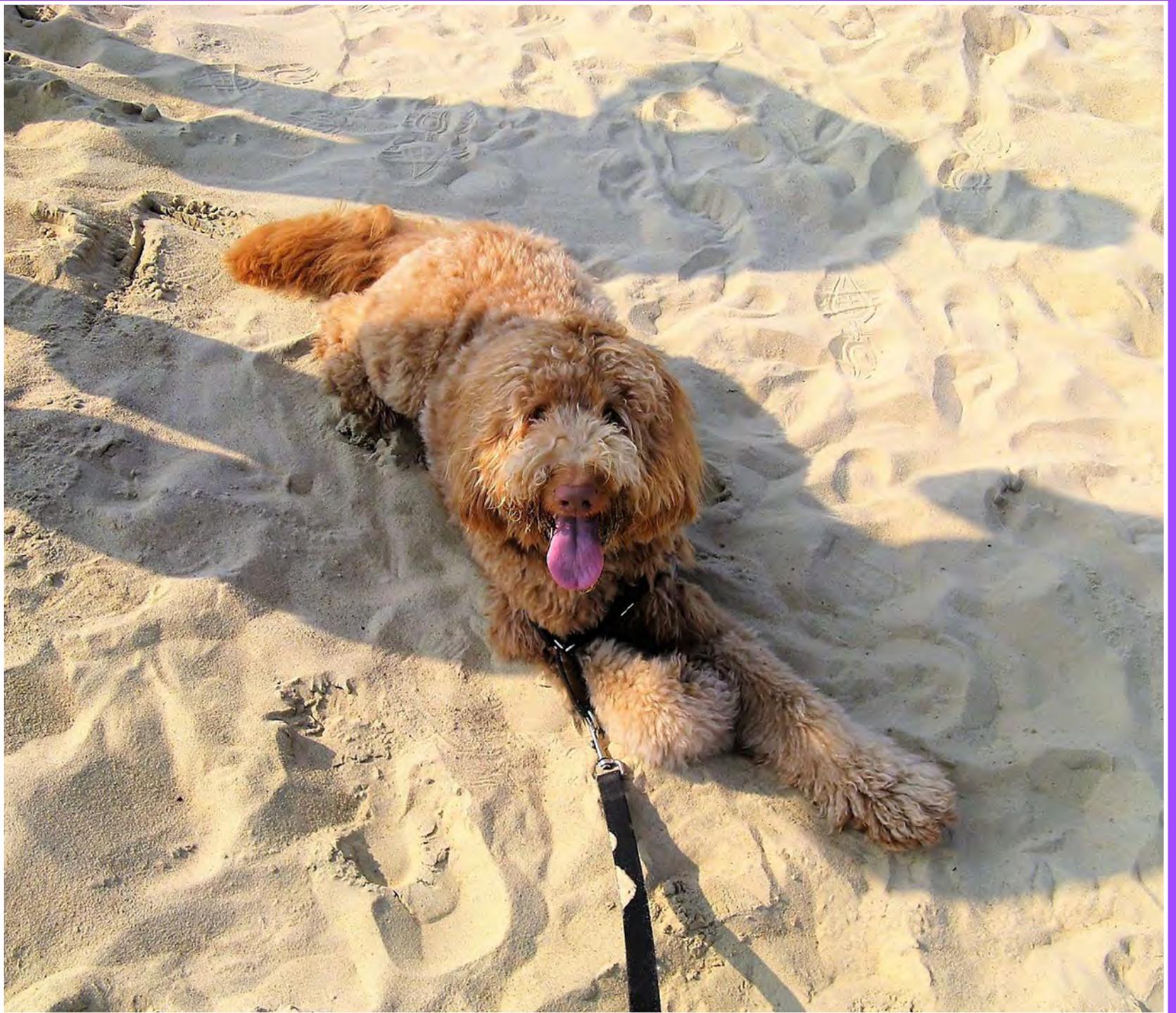
The Beach

On vacation in the Outer Banks, we'd take Tevi to the beach early in the morning, when the beach was nearly empty and dogs were allowed to run free, without a leash. "Born free..."

Tevi would take off and race way ahead of us, stopping just when we began to worry. Then he'd come running back to us, cock his head and look at us, as if to say, "Did you really think I'd run away?!"

It's not quite accurate to say that Tevi loved the beach. He loved half the beach -- the half that was covered with sand. Tevi was interested in the water but preferred that the water remain in its proper place. When the water decided to leave its place and approach him, he'd make a quick retreat!









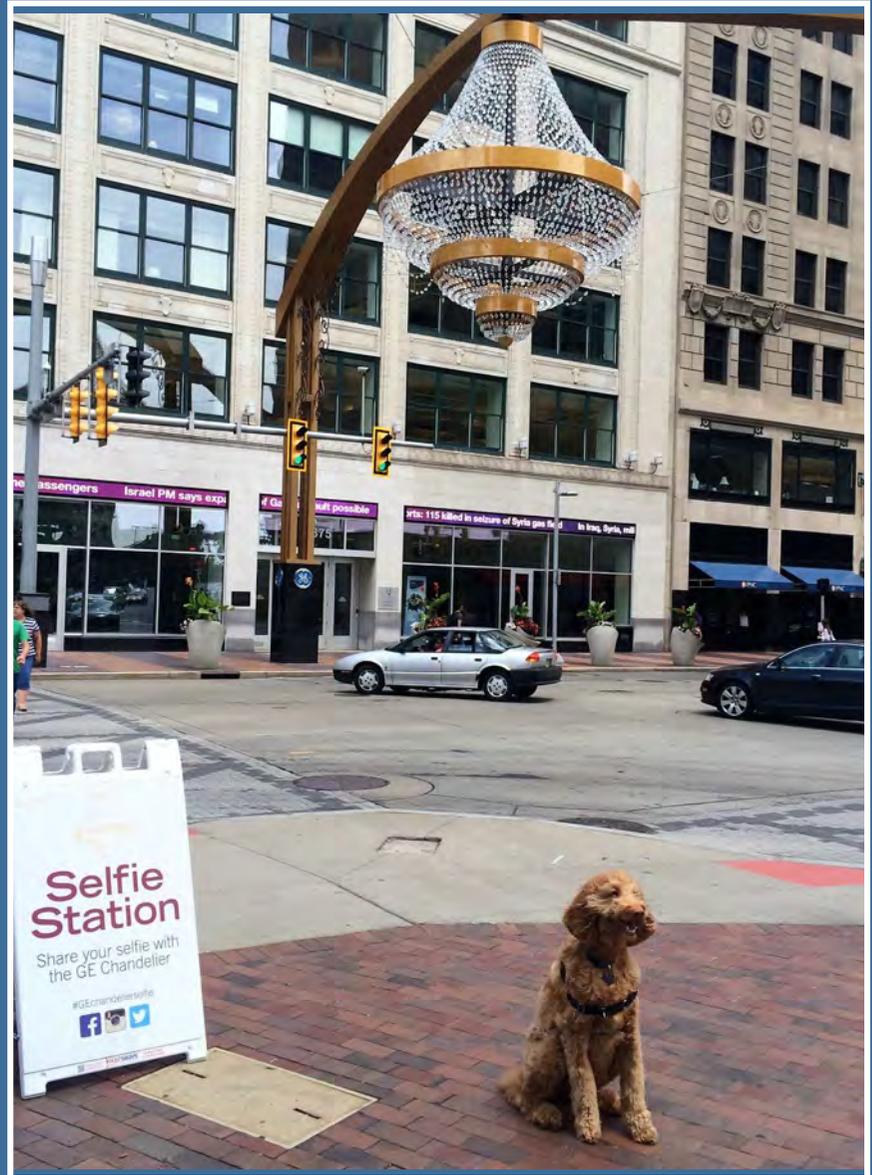
*It was just like a day at the beach when Tevi's cousins came to visit!
This day, though, was a little different since it was in late November!*

Tevi on Tour

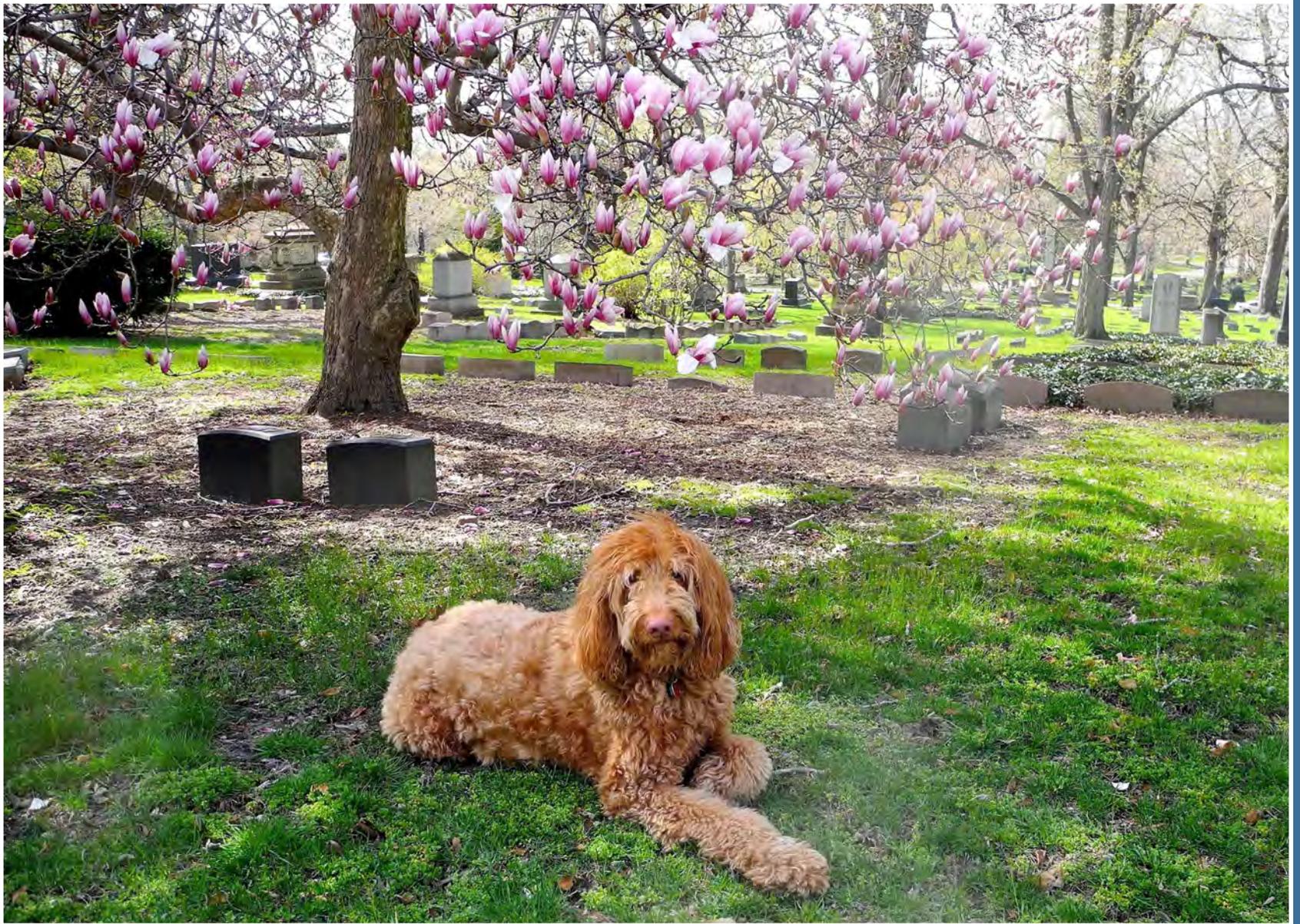
Cleveland is a city rich in cultural attractions and landmarks. Being a devotee of the arts and an admirer of fine architecture, Tevi always asked to accompany us on our trips to Public Square, the Art Museum, the Botanical Gardens and other attractions. We always complied, believing that a city is only as good as it treats the “leashed” among us!

Here he is at Playhouse Square posing in front of the world's largest outdoor chandelier.

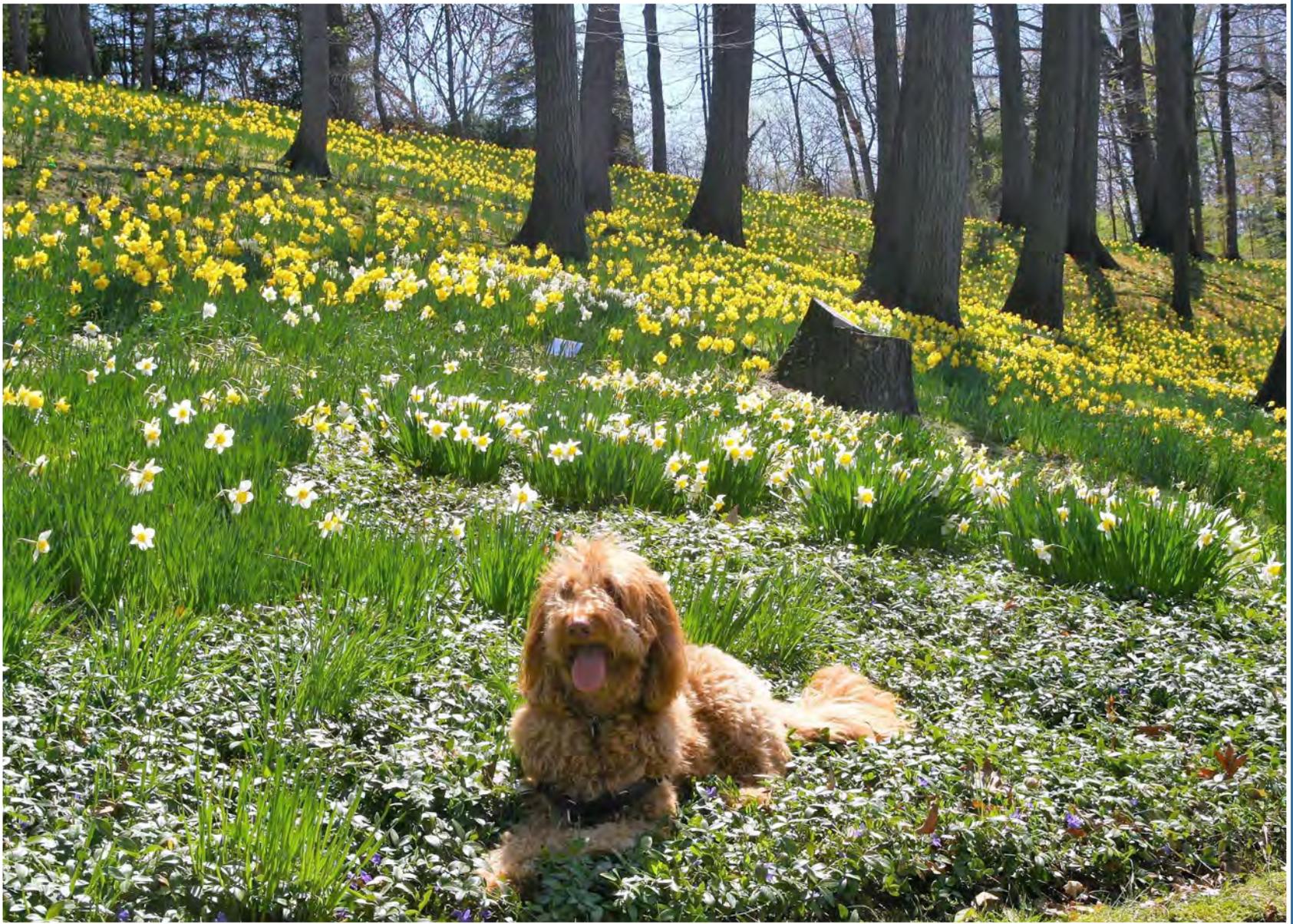
On the facing page, Tevi stops for a quick photo shoot in front of our favorite Japanese Cutleaf Maple as his backdrop.







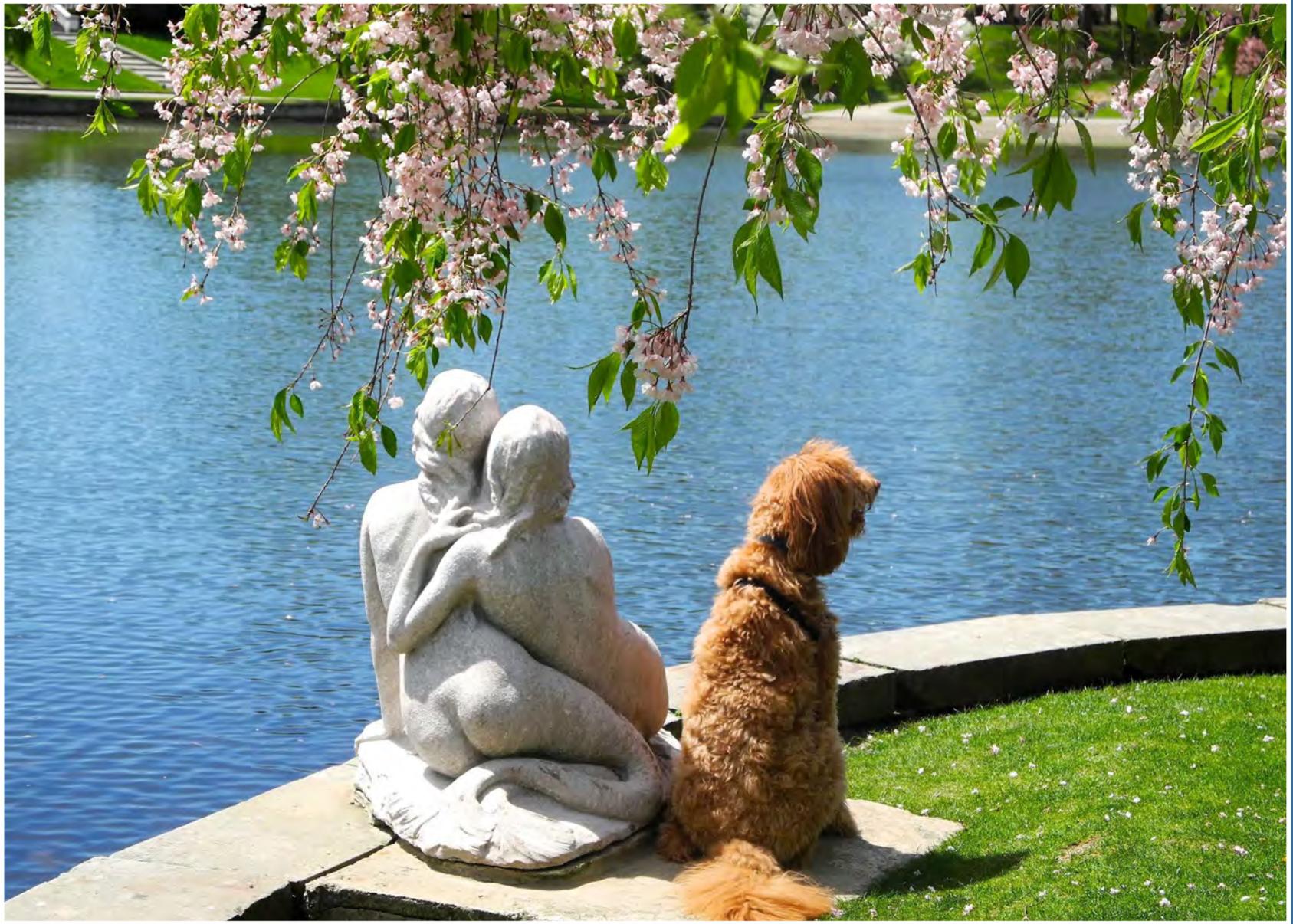
Just a few blocks from our house is Lakeview Cemetery, final resting place for the likes of President James Garfield, John D. Rockefeller and Elliot Ness! Being equally famous, at least in our neighborhood, Tevi found Lakeview a fitting place to rest during our frequent walks there.



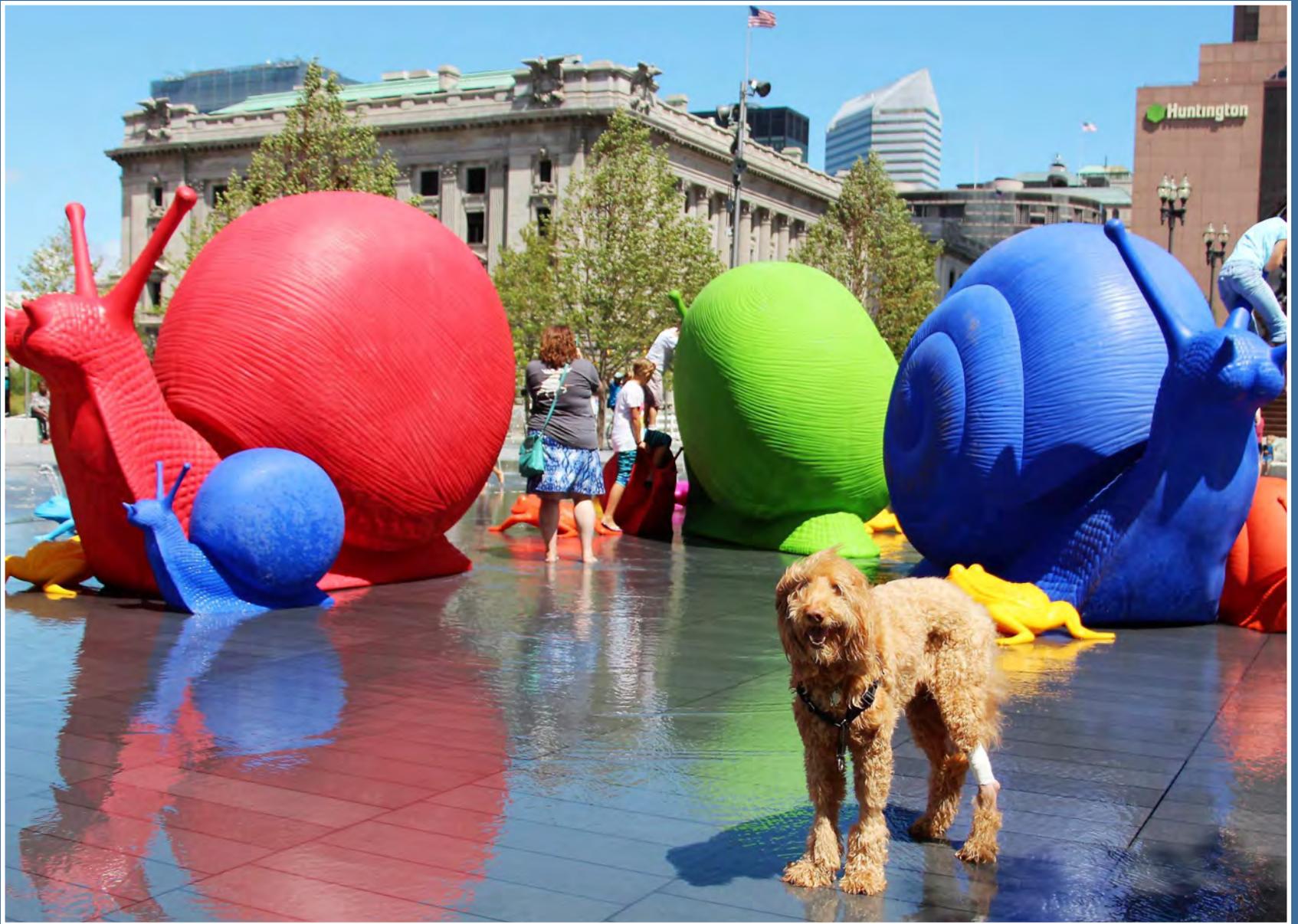
One of Tevi's favorite spots in Lakeview was Daffodil Hill, where his sunny disposition seemed to be a perfect complement to the springtime flowers!



Tevi especially appreciated this chalk art at The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Tevi had a special connection with his friends at the Art Museum lagoon.



Tevi added some life to this public art display at Public Square.



Tevi explores the new Uptown development in University Circle, relaxes at the Cleveland Botanical Garden, and enjoys the refreshing fountains at Public Square.

The Activist

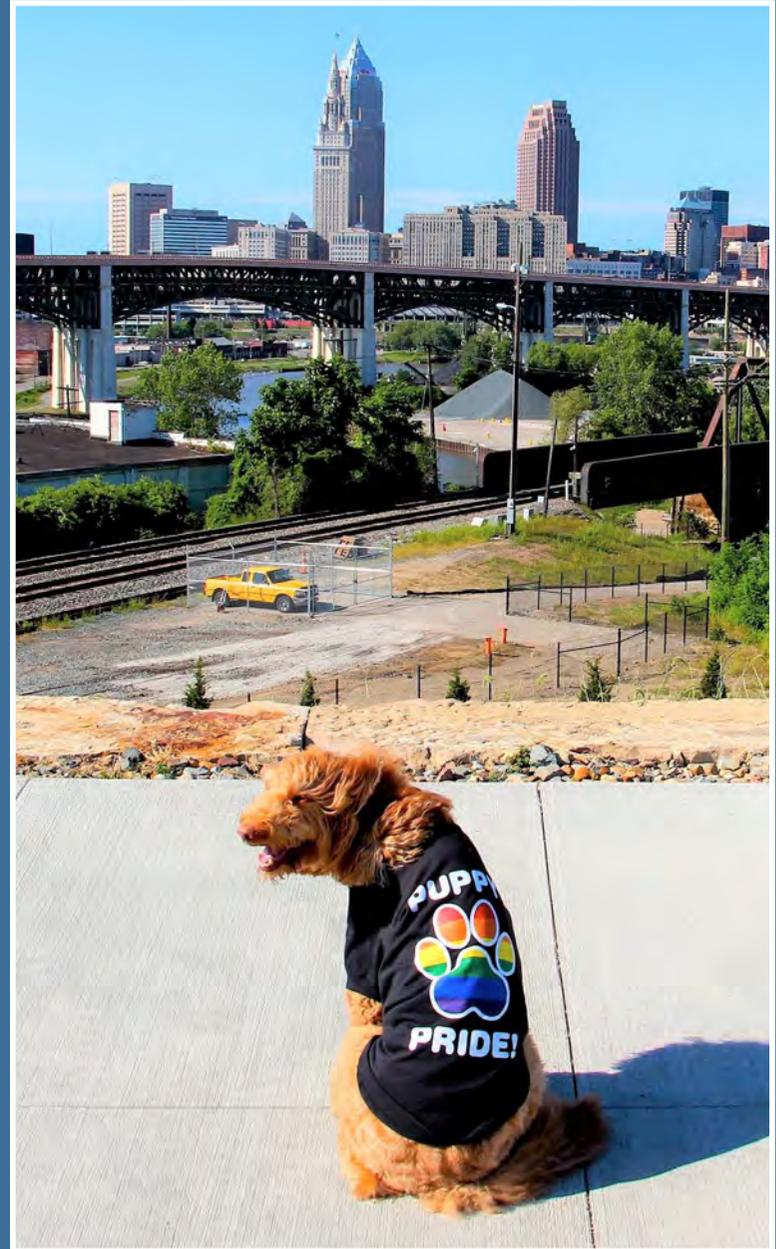
Growing up in the Coventry Village neighborhood of Cleveland Heights — Cleveland’s version of Haight Ashbury — Tevi became politically active at a young age.

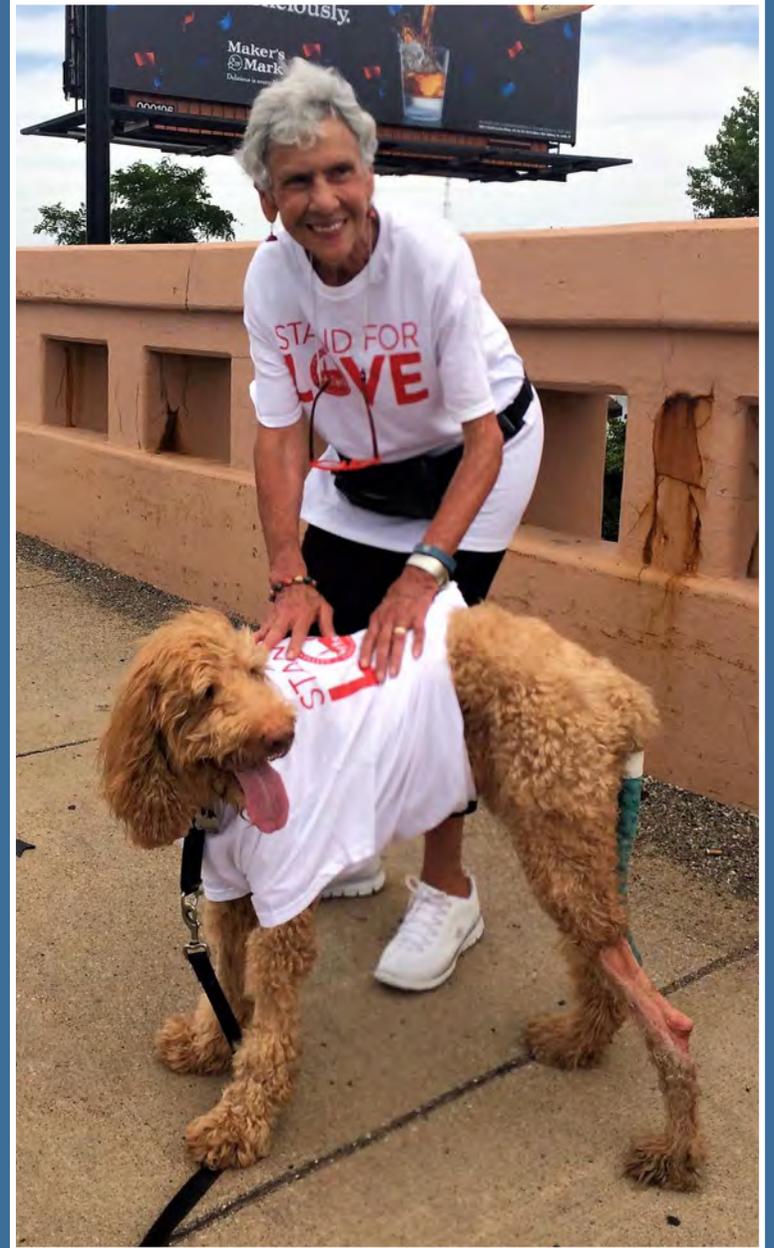
It was in 2008 that Tevi began campaigning in earnest, wearing his “Bark for Barack” shirt to rallies across the region. He also marched in parades with Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, violating protocol by getting more attention than any of the politicians.

At one of these parades, Tevi had a personal audience with Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, who became an instant admirer.

When the international Gay Games came to Cleveland in 2014, Tevi donned his new “Puppy Pride” shirt and joined the festivities.

Although he seemed somewhat conflicted when the RNC came to Cleveland in 2016, Tevi dutifully joined like-minded Clevelanders on a bridge (not a wall!), wearing his “Stand for Love” shirt.





Funny Guy

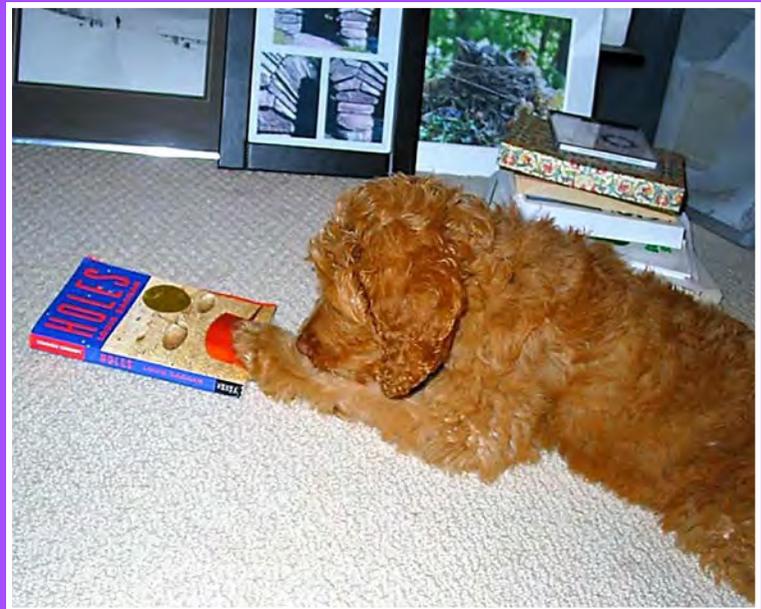
People often told us that Tevi looked like he was smiling. Some dog experts say that dogs can, in fact, smile, and that it shows that they are feeling happy.

Well, if that's the case, it appears that Tevi was almost always happy.

One thing that was clear, beyond any doubt, was that Tevi made people feel happy. Even though we never took the time to train him as a therapy dog, he seemed to need no training to give people whatever therapy they needed.



Tevi teaches proper tongue waving technique to his students in the Nussbaum family.



Tevi was an avid reader.



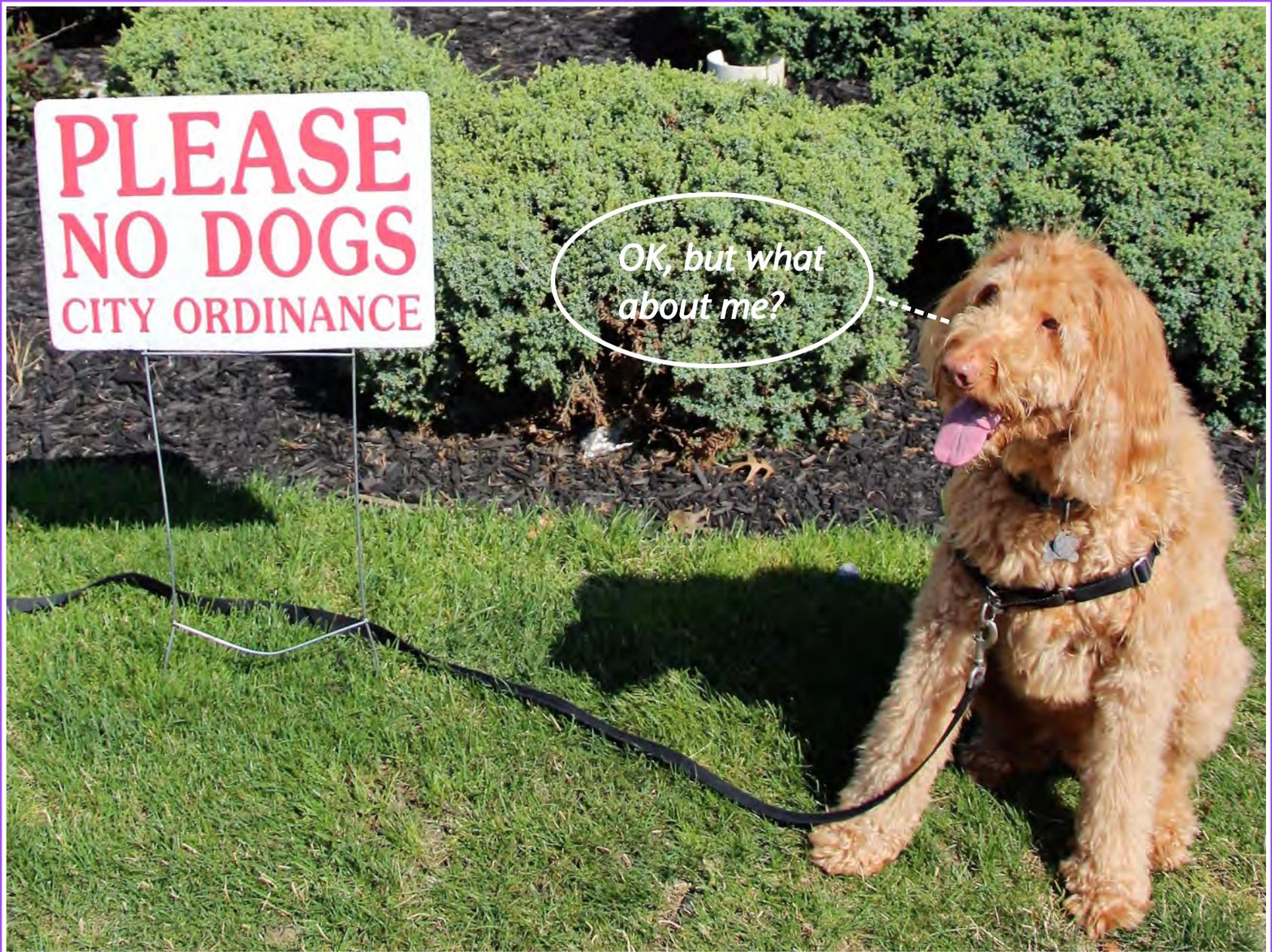
Nechama and Tevi. Who is imitating whom?

Tevi happily takes part in this "mini-me" day with Susan and Hope.



Tevi gleefully chases Moishe in pursuit of his glove in the Kalish family back yard. Tevi next focused on little brother Yehuda, grabbing his glove, which was attached to his coat by a string -- causing the two of them to perform a special "glove-in-mouth" ballet!

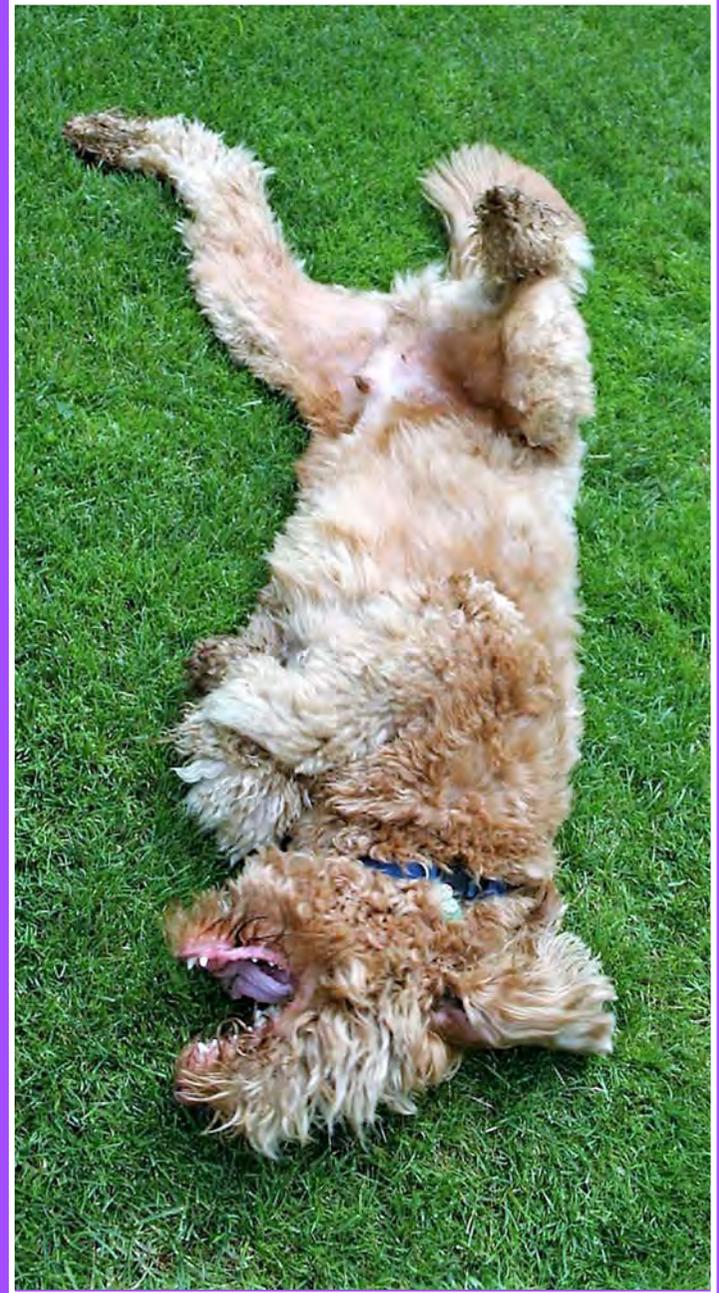
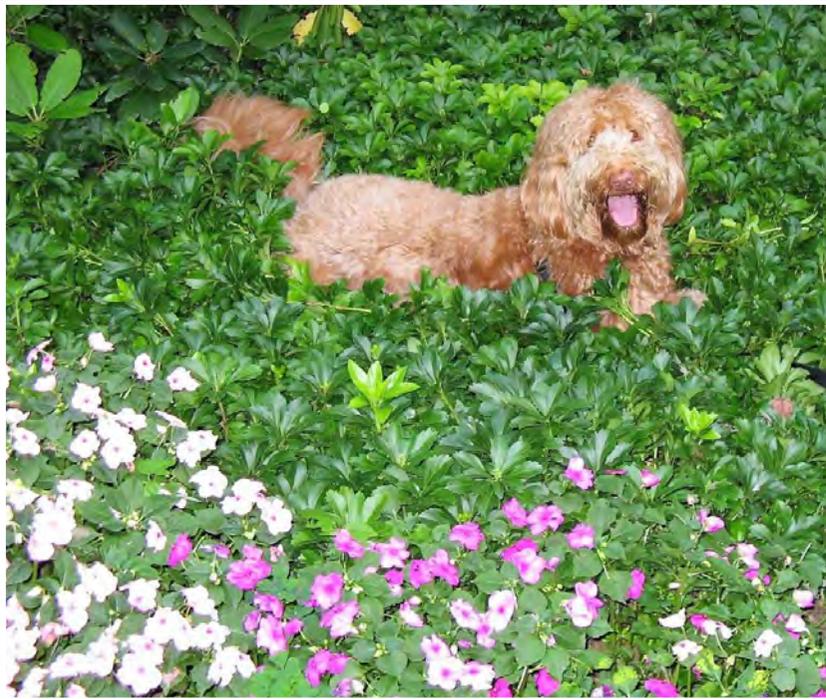




Most Saturday mornings we would take Tevi to the farmers market at Shaker Square, one of his favorite spots. He never understood, though, why he couldn't accompany Susan down the food aisles!

Lawn Guy

Like most dogs, Tevi loved rolling in the grass, but Tevi had a special liking for lying in Pachysandra. One of his favorite spots was the Pachysandra in front of Mom-Mom's home on Warrington Road. The problem came about each time we were ready to leave...and one member of our group had no intention of leaving!





Hats Off to Tevi

In deference to his self-respect, we rarely subjected Tevi to dress-up activities, but he was so accommodating that on occasion, we gave into the impulse to top him off with a hat.





Overnight Guests

Tevi loved sleepovers. As soon as he woke up in the morning, he'd find a way to the guests' door and ever so quietly, he'd do his special whisper bark.

Once he knew they were awake, he'd run into their bedroom and jump on their bed. And then for a day or two after they left, we'd notice him looking around the house, wondering where his friends had gone.





A Cuddler

If we ever had any doubts about the sweetness of Tevi's personality, those doubts disappeared when we saw how he reacted to children lying on him and cuddling.

We soon learned that he wasn't just tolerating the cuddling but he sought it out as he jumped up on couches and beds when his favorite humans were there to cuddle!





Special Friends

Some people put their dog in a bedroom or a basement when they have friends over to visit. Tevi's love of people ("company," in his vocabulary) made that seem like cruel and unusual punishment for him – not that we spoiled him.

Tevi liked all of our friends, but there were some friends he went crazy for – so much so that we could not even say their names unless they were about to walk in the door!

There are those who say that dogs lick you because they like the taste of the salt on your skin. They never met Tevi! He kissed people because he loved them. As you can see here, Mary Beth was always one of his favorite people to kiss.





When Tony would come over, Tevi would find his way next to him, no matter where he sat. Then when Sandy entered the picture, he loved finding his way right between them, as that was the coziest spot of all.





Angela Demchuk loved dogs but her mom, Felicia Fago, and sister, Katia Demchuk, needed some convincing. Luckily for all involved, Tevi sealed the deal and now sweet Lola is part of this beautiful family.

Tevi loved Ann for many reasons. He knew she understood him and he loved that she introduced his family to Lakeview Cemetery, which became a special place for walks.



From the time he was a pup, he couldn't contain himself around Nancy. He'd dance in circles, kiss her face from chin to forehead, and he wouldn't leave her side.





If we so much as whispered Jon's name, Tevi responded with excitement. There was a time we couldn't get him to come back in the house, so we told him that Jon and Cheryl were coming over. He ran in, propped himself in the big chair, looked out the window, and barked as he awaited their arrival.



Bernie, Emma, and Kiera were special friends. He never knew who to start kissing first!

Hope

Some girls have a dog. And some dogs have a girl. Hope was most definitely Tevi's girl. Perhaps it's because their birthdays are just months apart. But there was never any denying that these two had a special bond.

When Hope was little, she told Susan with some surprise in her voice that Bob was talking to Tevi. A few months later she told us that not only did she talk to Tevi, but he also talked to her.

They had story-time where Hope would read to him. They had sleepovers. They both got their own form of the giggles when they played together in the snow.

In our lives, we should all experience a love this pure.









A Love Like No Other

About nine years ago, I went to lunch with a friend just after Tevi joined our family. She said, "I know you. You're going to anthropomorphize that dog." I answered in the only way I could, which was to say that even though I didn't know what the word meant, I knew she knew me well, and that she had to be right!

Well, it took a matter of seconds for her prediction to become reality.

Last week we had quite a scare about Tevi's health, which thankfully turned out to be just a scare. It took our breath away and neither of us could stop the tears. Each time I lay in bed with tears streaming down my face, there was my sweet furry friend, licking them away.

Sadly, like all of us, I've known deep loss in my life. But this pain felt different and as I thought about why, I realized that I've never loved anything better than I've loved Tevi. Not more, but better. Better because it's a simple, uncomplicated love, one defined by joy and devoid of judgment, where the expectations are always clear and manageable.

The task of course is to model the traits of this love and relationship in all parts of our lives. But the truth is, it's often harder with people than pets.

So maybe now, the challenge is not to stop anthropomorphizing my sweet furry guy, but instead, to "canine-ize" my human relationships!

Susan
October 2014



Tevi would stand to hug and kiss Susan, greeting her this way each day she came home from work.



Tevi went along with Susan's frequent desire to take a selfie with him!

My Last Day with Tevi

I've never thought much about life after death. Maybe that's because I've never been sure about my belief in God. Years ago I lost both of my parents, but for some reason, their deaths did not make me think of the afterlife. Ironically, it is the passing of our dog Tevi that has brought the afterlife to my thoughts.

Tevi has been dying of cancer. Susan and I have been taking it day by day, deciding when Tevi's quality of life declines to the point that it is kindest to end his life. Yesterday we decided that today would be the day.

This morning I was sitting next to the bed where Tevi lay, while he rested peacefully at times and labored to take in enough air at other times. I was holding his hand (aka front paw) looking deeply into his eyes while he looked deeply into my eyes. In his eyes it

seemed that I was seeing something eternal, something that would not disappear with his passing later today.

In fact it seemed incomprehensible to me that this sweet being who had become so much a part of our lives for the past eleven years would no longer exist, even as I accepted the fact that life would leave his body at the scheduled time this afternoon.

I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a child, other than to know that it would be devastating. Losing this dog is the closest I have come to that. Tevi came into our lives as a baby, just ten weeks old.

He became part of our family. Susan says that he made us a family.

I always talked to Tevi like he was a person. I would choose my words carefully, trying to make sure that they were words he

understood or could learn to understand. I found that he was a very good learner.

Friends and family sometimes joked about my full-sentence communication with Tevi. Over the years, though, the joking seemed to change to recognition of how much Tevi understood our discussions. I sometimes told people that Tevi was insulted by one-word commands – communication that ignored the breadth of his vocabulary!

I felt responsible to educate Tevi about the human world in which he lived. After all, it was our decision, not his, that he would live in the world of humans. I felt that he had the right to be an informed participant in the life we had chosen for him.

Looking at Tevi again right now, as he lies in bed peacefully, all I can see is his kindness, like an aura around him.

Susan sometimes says that Tevi got his kindness from me and his sociability from her. Really, though, I know that we both helped give him those traits, just as he taught us that it is possible to live a life that is focused exclusively on showing kindness to others.

I remember, many years ago when I first brought my mother to a nursing home, Alzheimer's having robbed her of the ability to communicate, I had a moment when I seemed to be looking out through



her eyes and was surprised that she saw and understood everything that was happening around her, but it was like she was watching a movie as an observer and not a participant.

Her death came nearly a year later. My father's death, that same year, was a similarly gradual process. I never had the experience of looking into their eyes and realizing that death was imminent.

I am experiencing that for the first time, with Tevi. So today, I hold his hand and I kiss his warm head. It is now 12:30 in the afternoon. Tevi will be gone in about four hours. It is almost incomprehensible. His presence fills the room, fills the house, fills our lives. As he gasps for air, I know that we are making the right decision. It would be wrong to make such a sweet soul experience any more pain. Nevertheless, I can't stop the tears from coming to my eyes and my hands from trembling.

Tevi never shared his bucket list with us, but Susan has done a great job constructing it on the basis of our shared experiences. So in recent weeks we have gone apple picking, where Tevi plays with the fallen apples.

We've made trips to the Shaker Square farmers' market so that Tevi can see his "public."

And we've taken many neighborhood walks so that Tevi can make final visits with the many neighbors who now make up the extended family he created with his love. Yesterday evening Susan invited our Cleveland family to the house to say their goodbyes to Tevi. It was hardest on 10-year old Hope, who gave Tevi an hour-long hug and left the house sobbing.

This morning I had sweet conversations with my three daughters, as we shared our sadness over Tevi's fate and tried to hold back our tears.



It's now 5:15 p.m. Susan and I just returned home from the vet's office, where we had held Tevi close, telling him how much we loved him, as Dr. Farkas injected the anesthetic that began Tevi's ascent into a peaceful sleep. Dr. Farkas gave the final injection, and we continued to caress Tevi as we felt his breathing come to an end and his enormous heart stop beating.



We continued to talk to Tevi for the next several minutes. I looked hard to see if I saw his soul rising through the room. Susan told him that she would remember all the lessons he taught us and that she would try to be the person he thought she was.

Now, as this day ends and darkness has filled the sky, we sit alone in our house...so empty.

Tomorrow there will be time to remember how our lives have been changed forever by the love of our sweet Tevi.

But for the moment, it is Tevi's absence that fills our hearts.

Bob
October 21, 2016









Tevye

(aka Tevi, Tevi Tevs, Tevi the Tevster)

We learned about the power of kindness and unconditional love from this sweet being. He filled our lives with joy and connected us to the world in beautiful ways. People often said they thought we'd unzip Tevi's furry costume and a human would come out. We came to realize that this special spirit actually helped us see the deeper humanity in this world, so just maybe, he was uncloaking us.

*With gratitude and love,
Susan Berger and Bob Brown*