

DR. WESCOTT SOLVES

The Case Of

The Talking Dog

By WILBORNE HARRELL

A CHOWAN HERALD FICTION STORY



Continued
Lieutenant Crosby scanned his notes and he and Wescott exchanged words now and then. But they were so low I couldn't understand what they were saying.

Higgins knocked and entered, bearing in his arms a small dog, of the terrier type.

"Pardon me, Mr. Hammond. Here is Poochie, sir. He was whining and scratching at the back door."

The dog was nestled in Higgins' arms, but when he heard his name he sprang to the floor, ran to Maurice Hammond and jumped into his lap. Hammond apathetically looked down at the dog and absently stroked his head and fondled his ears. The dog whined and made a swipe with his tongue at Hammond's hand.

Poochie's body was dust-laden and great rings of dust circled his eyes. Tied to his collar was a short length of rope, the kind that is known as window cord. He was apparently footsore and evidently had traveled a long way home.

We all eyed the dog. Higgins said, "Shall I take him away, sir?"

Maurice Hammond seemed to be jerked back to reality, from some far off land of his own. He looked at Poochie and stroking him, said, "No, let him stay, Higgins."

Poochie jumped to the floor and sitting on his haunches, barked. "Oh, Poochie, if you could only talk," said Hammond. "You could tell us where to find Melissa. You know — you know!"

Poochie furiously thumped his short tail on the floor and cocked his head wisely to one side.

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as if he understood that Hammond was talking about Melissa. He barked again.

During all this, Wescott and Crosby said nothing, but I noticed Wescott had been looking intently at the dog.

Dr. Wescott took a turn around the room and stopped before Lieutenant Crosby. "Crosby, maybe Poochie can talk, or we can work it so he can tell us a lot we desperately need to know."

Lieutenant Crosby eyed Dr. Wescott as though he were out of his mind, but he said, "Okay, Sherlock, what's on your mind? God knows we need something to go on."

Dr. Wescott stooped and picking up Poochie placed him in the arms of a dumbfounded Crosby. "Take Poochie down-town and have your lab boys give him a good going-over. It is my guess if they can find out where Poochie has been, we will know where Melissa is being held."

Poochie barked and Crosby looked down at the dog. Understanding burst on Crosby's face.

"Of course, of course! Right away, Wescott. You're in charge here now; I'll make it back as quickly as I can — Come on, Poochie, let's go."

The door slammed as Crosby, bearing Poochie, went out the front door.

With Crosby gone, time weighed heavily on us as we waited. The telephone rang once, but when Higgins asked if there was any message, we knew it could not have been our kidnapper. Dr. Wescott lit a cigarette and smoked thoughtfully. Maurice Hammond sat staring at nothing, and I—I was ready to hit the ceiling when Lieutenant Crosby returned. It seemed like an interminably long time, but actually less than an hour had passed since Crosby had left with Poochie.

Crosby was grinning. "Wescott, you hit it. What they found out about Poochie would fill a book, but I'll make it brief." He placed Poochie on the floor who immediately ran to Hammond and sprang into his arms.

Crosby drew a paper from his pocket, and unfolding it, spread it on the table. Wescott and I crowded around. "This is a county-wide map," said the Lieutenant, "and from what the lab boys learned, we can practically pinpoint where Melissa is held. They found out a lot,

but they brought out three major facts that are important: Number one, Poochie was covered with a fine, red dust that could have come only from the old Turnpike Road that goes out north of town. Number two, Poochie's paws held particles of fresh asphalt."

Crosby placed his finger on a spot on the map. "About five miles out, crossing the old Turnpike Road, a new highway is under construction. Poochie crossed that highway, but he could not have come from much farther away, because he did not have the time. It is sparsely settled beyond the new road, so Melissa must be held in one of a few houses in that locality."

He looked up at Wescott. "Wescott, we've got him! But here's the last but most important thing the lab boys found out about Poochie. The length of rope tied to his collar was tied with an intricate seaman's knot, which suggested only a sailor must have tied it. Instantly, that rang a bell with me—Sailor Dugan. This is something he'd try to pull. Right up his alley. He's a vicious, degenerate killer and should be in jail, but we couldn't pin anything on him—until now. But, if the Sailor does have Melissa, we'll have to work quickly and carefully."

Crosby paused, looked at Wescott and cast a significant nod at Hammond. He lowered his voice. "It's a sure thing, Wescott, the Sailor will never return Melissa alive—even if he got the money. We have no choice; we have got to take Melissa away from the Sailor before he kills her. We have got to force his hand—now—before it's too late!"

Dr. Wescott had been listening attentively to Crosby's recital and from the look on his face I know he was thinking furiously. A little girl's life was in their hands; if they made a wrong move—

He lit a cigarette, took a deep drag; his eyes rested on Poochie, lying calmly in Hammond's arms. He took a turn about the room, came back to the table. He said, "Crosby, Poochie has led us this far, so let's let him lead

us to Melissa." "Go on, I'm listening," said Crosby.

Wescott said, "we'll take Poochie—just the three of us—out to the point where the new road crosses the old Turnpike Road and release him. We'll tell him to go find Melissa. It's a sure thing he'll make tracks to the house where the Sailor is holding Melissa. You and Jimmy and I will follow at a safe distance, and when Poochie turns off the road and heads for a house—let's pray he goes to the front door—we'll circle around and enter the back door. It's a safe bet Poochie's barking and scratching at the front door will draw the Sailor to the front of the house, while we close in on the rear. From there on we'll have to play it by ear and take the breaks as they come. It's a gamble — but it's our only chance."

"You and I, Crosby, will give our attention to the Sailor, and Jimmy will grab Melissa and get her out of the house and out of danger as quickly as he can." Crosby's only comment was characteristic. He drew his revolver, checked the cartridge chamber, and said, "Okay. Let's go."

(continued next week)

Merry Hill News

By Mrs. Ethel Winborne

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Layton and children were the week-end guests of their daughters and husbands, Mr. and Mrs. Donnie Smithwick and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas White of Hampton.

Mrs. Richard Smithwick and daughter, Miss Anne Smithwick spent Tuesday in Raleigh.

Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Pruden, Jr., and children, Ellen, Edmund and Marie and Mr. and Mrs. Howard White and children spent the week-end at the Pruden cottage at Nags Head.

Mrs. Archie Rhea of Ahoskie spent Sunday here with her mother, Mrs. Lloyd Cobb.

Rupert Liverman of Harrellsville was the guest of his daughter,

Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Pruden, Jr., and husband and children Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pierce of Norfolk visited Mr. and Mrs. Mathew Pierce, also other relatives and friends here Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. John Foxwell of Edenton and son, Calvin of South Carolina, visited Mrs. H. E. Foxwell Sunday afternoon.

Mrs. B. G. Willis, Mrs. Bettie Willis, Mrs. D. A. Byrd and Ellen Pruden and Mrs. A. B. Phelps of Windsor visited Miss Nancy Pruden in Wilson Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. William White and Mrs. H. E. Foxwell spent Thursday in Windsor and visited his sister, Mrs. Mittie Sue Bowen and daughter, Patsy.

Mrs. Sue Britt returned home Friday after spending the past two weeks with her daughter and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Hitt and boys. She and Mrs. Hitt spent Sunday at Williamsburg.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Keeter and Eddie of Hampton spent the week-end at their home here. J. W. Winborne visited Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Megginson of Norfolk Wednesday.

Miss Kay White recently enjoyed a trip into Delaware, Cape Charles, Va., and other points of interest with her aunts, Mrs. Mittie Sue Bowen, Miss Vivian White and Miss Patsy Bowen, her cousin of Windsor.

Miss Patricia Phelps of Raleigh spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Phelps.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Byrum and boys, Michael and Scott Phelps of Edenton visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe White Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Keeter and son, Scott of Edenton visited Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Keeter and Mr. and Mrs. Roy Baker.

Mr. and Mrs. Pat Harrell and children of Edenton were Sun-

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visited her sister, Mrs. G. E. Keeter in the Bertie Memorial Hospital at Windsor Sunday. Mrs. Keeter's condition remains very critical.

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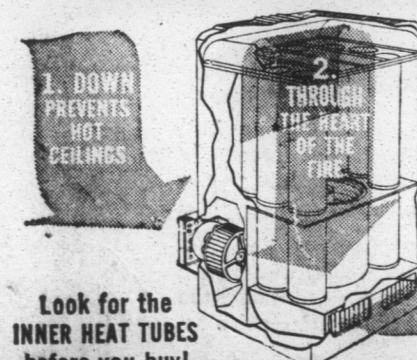
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