

## BEAGLE.

By James Collins.

My brother Don bought the Beagle named Rufus from a pet store in Coney Island. The store advertised the Beagle as being a hunting dog, lovable, and well trained. None of these proved to be true. Rufus was stubborn, devious, very smart, and very strong. These appeared to be a very aggravating combination of personality traits.

The first episode that indicated how this dog would fit into the family occurred a week after we acquired him. My mother and brother had carried groceries in brown paper bags up three flights of stairs and placed them on the kitchen table. A swinging door separated the kitchen area from the living room. My mother and brother joined the rest of us in the living room to discuss our plans for today. After about 20 minutes, my mother asked me to go and take the groceries and put them away. I opened the swinging door and viewed the package closest to me with a box of Mallowmars sticking out of the top. I reached for the end of the box, grabbed it and pulled it part way out of the bag. I noticed it had no weight.

"Mom, do you realize you brought home a box of Mallowmars with nothing in it?"

"What you talking about? I bought the package and put them on the checkout counter myself. They were full."

I then pulled the empty box out of the bag and saw the other end torn open and covered with dog saliva. We then realized that Rufus had pulled the box of Mallowmars out of the bag. He then tore the end off the box, ate all the cookies and replaced the empty box back in the bag in such a way that the damage end was hidden. This dog was smart and devious.

The next episode became known as the Tumbleweed puzzle in the family history. The family would go out on a Sunday afternoon and leave the dog alone in the apartment. When we returned, we would find big balls of Brown fluff in the apartment. These were fiber balls between 6 inches to 18 inches in diameter. They were spherical and if you blew hard, you could move them across the floor, hence the name Tumbleweed. Search as we might we could never find where these originated. Four weeks passed, and each Sunday we would leave and when we returned Tumbleweed balls were all over the apartment. We were at a total loss as to where these originated. The first week of spring ritual required us to roll up the rugs, which covered the floor in winter. As we rolled back the main rug in the living room, we uncovered the jute base rug, which added softness to the walking surface. A huge section underneath the corner of the rug, about five feet in diameter, was missing. We realized that when we left on a Sunday, Rufus decided to amuse himself by pulling back the rug frantically digging with his claws into the jute surface. This action converted the solid jute under rug to the Brown fluff we recognized as Tumbleweed. This was enlightening and at the same time raised a warning flag that we were dealing with a very smart and manipulative dog. We realized that once he finished playing, he pulled the rug back over the evidence to hide what he knew he was not supposed

to do. Then he sat back, and in his dog's mind, laughed at the dummies who could not determine where the Tumbleweed originated.

The final episode we referred to as 'the suicide attempt'. I arrived home from work, opened the door and walked into the apartment to hear my mother yelling at the dog. This was not new, since he and she had declared war upon each other. We had a long 35-foot corridor in the apartment. As I walked towards the sound of my mother's voice, I could hear the dog's feet rapidly moving with nails scratching on the wood floor. I came around a corner just in time to see the dog launch itself through the air towards a large window. My mother jumped to the side stretched out her arms and intercepted the dog's body as it slammed into her chest. She fell down on her knees. I immediately ran over, grabbed the dog by the collar restrained him and attached a leash which I tied to a radiator. I went over to my mother to assist her and asked her what was going on.

"The dog has gone crazy and has been trying to commit suicide by jumping out the window. I keep jumping in front of him to stop him, but then he just backs up, runs down the hall and tries again."

"Why did you stop him? Let the damn dog jump. He has been nothing but a problem since we got him."

"I'd like to but he's your brother's dog, and if Rufus jumps out the window, your brother will think I threw him out the window. I am glad you got him tied down I now have a chance to go somewhere and rest. This is been going on for a half-hour."

That evening when the family got together, we had a big discussion about Rufus. Once he challenged Mom, he did not fit with the family. My brother was his only defender. We all agreed the dog really belonged in a mental institution. The vote was four to one. Rufus had to go. The following Saturday, my brother and I went back to Coney Island to have it out with the pet storeowner. We must have looked a little bit intimidating because he backed down rather quickly and returned our fee. Only at that time did we learn that another owner with a similar pedigree problem had previously returned Rufus. Nobody in the family has ever acquired a beagle again.

THE END