

The Adventures of Miz MaggieDove and her dog Boone

Miz MaggieDove is a hair stylist extraordinaire.

She can take the limpiest, frizziest, most desperate hair and make it beautiful.

She travels all over America along the Fair Circuit making people's hair beautiful.

She always takes me with her.

My name is Boone, named after J. A. Boone of "Kinship with All Life" fame.

I didn't always live and travel with Miz MaggieDove.

My first companion was a kind Tlingit man who taught me how to walk by his side. If you walk by my side, he said, I will never burden you with a leash. He never did, even though our town has leash laws.

One day this kind man's life became burdened and he had to leave the place where we were born. He knew that Miz MaggieDove loved me and would take good care of me; she also did not believe in leashes. So, at the age of two in human years, my days of walking at Miz MaggieDove's side began.

Miz MaggieDove is what many people call "a dog person." When I came to live with her she had two other dogs she told me were in the evening of their lives, whereas I was in the morning of mine. Miz MaggieDove loves

poetry and metaphors. I think that is why people who never consider that their hair can be beautiful find their way to her Fair Booth. She is the peripatetic poet of hair stylists.

I want to go on record here and now that I am not against leash laws. I have witnessed leashes prevent many injustices and injuries. I have also seen them abused. Confidentially, if Miz MaggieDove asked me to wear a leash now and then, I would not object. Thus far, however, I have given her no reason to entangle me with a collar and a leash. I have had to learn to discipline myself, to restrain myself from every instinct in my being. I have even created a mantra for myself: Chasing cats is not fun, it is futile. Chasing cats is not fun, it is futile.

Miz MaggieDove taught me that cats are fierce and can rip my nose off with their sharp claws, so when we visit her friends who are what some people call “cat people,” I sit quietly and try to mind my own business. So far only kittens and really old, blind cats have bothered to get to know me.

I think I would make a good companion for a blind person. Miz MaggieDove told me that to become a guide dog takes more than a year of special training. During our travels we have visited some of the training schools around the country. In Texas, Miz MaggieDove and I noticed dogs have a Texas twang when they speak and love listening to country music on the radio. In Hawaii, they speak a kind of pidgin English and like to hula to ukulele music. As Miz MaggieDove and I prefer jazz singers like Nina

Simone and Ella Fitzgerald, Johnny Hartman and Tony Bennett and living life on the road, we decided that we would forego training me to be a guide dog. But that doesn't mean I am not called on to use my superpowers.

Miz MaggieDove is not blind, but she does have a disability that has created a special bond between us. She lost her sense of taste and smell from an ice-skating accident. I should have been wearing a helmet, she told me. Although she did go through a grieving period, she is not one to sit around feeling sorry for herself. She lives as I do, completely in the here and now of things. (I stole that line from my name-genitor.)

It's not easy for me to imagine what it would be like to live without a sense of smell. I'm a dog. My sniffer is 10,000 times more sensitive than that a human's and can be trained to seek out illegal drugs, find dead bodies, recover live bodies buried beneath rubble, detect illnesses like cancer and diabetes, even locate the missing neighborhood cat. "What do you smell?" Miz MaggieDove always asks me.

Today I smell sadness. Miz MaggieDove has learned that her lifelong friend and mentor has died. She would have loved you, she said as she snuggled my face and massaged the backs of my ears. She would have loved you because you pay attention. You know I'm sad, don't cha Boone? You notice everything.

Human beings keep stashes of stuff. Sometimes, in my opinion, too much stuff. Sometimes the stuff is hidden in drawers or packed in boxes and

stored in attics or under beds. Sometimes the stuff is placed in chests lined with cedar, a strong, bright odor that often causes me to sneeze.

This cedar chest belonged to my favorite person on the planet, my paternal grandmother, Miz MaggieDove tells me. These chests were called “hope chests.” “Hope is the thing with feathers.” “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.” Hope is not a cedar chest filled with linens and things for when a woman marries. Why should a woman hope to get married? She either wants to or doesn’t want to. What do you think, Boone?

Miz MaggieDove knows that dogs don’t marry. We mate. We don’t even have to be the same color or size or nationality. Heck, we can parlez-vous with a wolf if we are so inclined.

After sifting through the chest, Miz MaggieDove shows me a book of photos.

Achoo!

This is my friend when we sailed down the Turquoise Coast. And this is when we climbed the 10,000 steps to the 10,000 Buddhas Monastery. And this is when we were in New York and went to Ellis Island. Look at this. Yikes, bad hair day but isn’t this sign funny? “Unattended children will be given an espresso and a free puppy.” It’s from when we had lunch at Doris Day’s hotel in Carmel. You’d love it there. Dogs are welcome.

Miz MaggieDove spent the rest of the afternoon looking through old photo albums and reading from the journals of their travels together. I sat right next to her. Sometimes she would laugh and sometimes she would tear up and sometimes she would cry. Sometimes she would pet me and tell me what a good buddy I am. Sometimes she would nuzzle me with her face and tell me what a lucky person she is to have had such a wonderful mentor, good friend and traveling companion. Sometimes she would just pet me and say nothing.

Miz MaggieDove owns a completely refurbished 1989 22-foot Winnebago Warrior. It is our home away from home. Our tribal house. Our gypsy caravan. Our “waggin’ train.” It is equipped with everything we need, including a Miz MaggieDove-designed portable haircutting station and a bed made for a human and her dog.

Boone, no more pity party, time to get waggin’!

Waggin’ is Miz MaggieDove’s expression for “time to hit the road and do our thing.” She started using this phrase after her friend who lives in a retirement community emerged from the elevator wearing a WAG MORE. BARK LESS. t-shirt. When Miz MaggieDove greeted her friend, she turned and wagged the part of her body where a tail would be and then they both started laughing. WAG MORE is Miz MaggieDove’s new mantra. If you ask me, I think it’s the perfect image for a peripatetic hair stylist and her tail wagging dog.

On our way to the Alaska State Fair we stopped to visit the kind Tlingit man who took me in when I was a pup. He was so happy to see Miz MaggieDove and me. His smile was like my tail wagging really fast. He couldn't stop talking and telling us about his new home and the work he does for his community. He tells stories and makes art and shares the traditions of his culture with anyone who wants to learn, no discrimination. He even has a new dog.

When we got back on the road I started thinking about what makes someone extraordinary and how to recognize it. It isn't always apparent when you see someone walking down the street with glittery hair and big sunglasses and a dog by her side. What makes a person extraordinary is knowing that with every act, with every wag of a tail, we have the ability to change a life, even if it comes in the act of a haircut or the silence of companionship or caring for a dog when a friend is in trouble. I think everyone should have a Miz MaggieDove, don't you?

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