

Chapter 2: Working and Playing

“Can I come watch you hit golf shots into your practice net?”

My golf practice net is in a small side yard at home. It’s a great work break to go out for a few minutes and practice chip shots or short pitches. For Jamie, it’s an excuse to enjoy being outside in the back yard. As soon as she sees me pick up my pitching wedge, she jumps up and runs down the hall. When she gets to the door, she looks back over her shoulder, as if to say, “Tell me when you’re ready. First, I’m going to go chase the neighbor’s cats off the fence. Then I’ll come watch you practice. And, oh by the way, I’ll probably stop for a minute to pee in the ivy, because I’m not allowed to pee on Barbara’s precious Marathon grass.”



Once the cats have been chased and the ivy has been peed upon, Jamie runs to the narrow stretch of side yard behind my net. Jamie always watches my golf practice from behind the net. She doesn’t seem to have much faith in my golf swing. If she gets bored with golf practice, she sits in the sunshine in the backyard. When I’m done practicing, she runs into the house ahead of me, and takes up her station outside my office.

Jamie, the barbeque dog

Jamie knows when it's time to barbeque. If the patio door is open in the evening, it probably tips her off. As soon as we turn on the gas barbeque, Jamie plops down beside it. "I'm here to help! At least to lend moral support." It doesn't matter how many times I leave the barbeque to get food or utensils. From the moment the grill starts to heat, Jamie's there to supervise. She never lies more than about five feet from the barbeque. She stays there while the burners are heating up and until dinner is on its way to the table. "I really enjoy watching you barbeque dinner." When the grilling is over and the food is on a platter, Jamie gives a quizzical look. "So where are we eating tonight? In the den, the dining room, or on the patio?"



“Could you please fill my water bucket?”

Jamie's water bucket is a large gardening bucket that doubles for topping up a fountain in our flower garden. Every morning, we fill the fountain and then refill the bucket so Jamie has all the water she needs during the day. Well, almost every morning. If we slip up, we can be sure of getting a little puppy reminder that the water in the bucket is below puppy drinking level. Jamie sends this message by standing quietly with her mouth open, making eye contact and breathing heavily.

“No jacuzzi for me, but could I have a puppy scratch?”

Jamie loves any chance to be outdoors. One of her favorite times is our daily pre-bedtime Jacuzzi. The Jacuzzi is under a trellis right outside our bedroom, so it’s a perfect opportunity to chase the neighbor’s cats and make sure the yard hasn’t been invaded by any other critters, like raccoons or possums. Sometimes she hears, or sniffs, something in the trees. Her nose and ears aim in the direction of the offending critter. In this case, the “critter” turned out to be a small possum climbing in a tree.



After making her rounds and finishing her inspection, Jamie always walks to the Jacuzzi and gently lays a paw on my shoulder. “How about washing off my dirty paws (from running around in the garden and the ivy) and giving me a

really good ear and chest scratch?” She keeps pawing until she gets what she’s looking for. And she usually leaves a muddy puppy paw print on my shoulder.

In spite of my best efforts to clean her paws, Jamie leaves a trail of dirty puppy tracks on the bathroom rugs when we go back inside. Endearing her even more to house cleaner Abelina.

