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Guest commentary

The dream conversation: What if my beloved dog could talk?

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by [Bill Wellborn](#)

A few years ago, I had a dream. It was one of those dreams that was so vivid, I woke up believing that it might actually have happened.

In the dream, I was standing on a green, manicured lawn. To my left, I heard a great commotion coming from a small, vine-covered hill. Dust was flying as some creature battled its way through the brambles.

What emerged was my dog, Howie, a white Australian shepherd. He was walking on his hind legs. And he strolled up, looked me in the eye and, in a deep voice with little inflection, said "I'm hot."

In my dream, I was flabbergasted. I was floored. I was amazed. Not only had my dog talked, he had uttered an entire sentence, complete with subject, verb and some kind of modifier. Maybe an adjective. I planned to ask him to explain it.

Alas, though, the next morning Howie was back on all fours and had resumed his disposition of not being the brightest bulb. In fact, my attempts at normal conversation were extremely one-sided.

Since then, though, I have carried the dream that one day, one of my dogs would stand up on his hind legs and say something like "Let's eat" or "There's a squirrel in the yard."

Most of my dogs have not shown the level of intelligence that would give me hope for conversation. Howie, for instance, did not respond to basic commands, like "Here comes our new neighbor. Please don't bite her."

When old age caught up with Howie, my wife got the notion that she wanted a chocolate Lab. Through [Labs4Rescue](#), we journeyed to Olive Branch, Miss., to look at one. There were a lot of other dogs present, but one look at this Lab told us what we had heard about chocolates was true: He was dumb as a post.

We found another dog, a mixed-breed that one vet believes to be mostly Doberman, that caught our eye. And Steel, obviously a dog of high intelligence, is beginning to show promise as a potential talking dog. He loves to retrieve, but it's often hard to get one past him because he seems to anticipate the direction you plan to kick it. Our son taught him to roll over in one training session. He understands perfectly when we say "Go look out the window" or "There's a dog on TV."

It's the TV thing that blows our mind. Any animal, but especially a dog, that crosses the screen gets his immediate attention. He becomes transfixed. His nose is touching the screen. If a dog makes a sudden move, Steel attacks it. He has moved our 31-inch TV six inches with his nose in a single lunge.

Once I happened upon a pretty bad movie called "Snow Dogs." It was terrible, but Steel couldn't take his eyes away from it. He watched it without moving for two hours. He even watched the credits.

We now have the "Snow Dogs" DVD. Steel never gets tired of it.

We also discovered a film featuring dogs that appear to talk through the wonders of movie magic. I'm hoping if Steel watches this one enough, he'll get the idea. Then maybe one day I'll come home from work and instead of licks in the face from Steel, he'll stand up and say, "You know, the dialogue in 'Snow Dogs' is pretty lame."

And I'll say, "You're right. Let's watch 'White Fang' again."

Then he'll say, "I'm hot. Turn on the ceiling fan. Plus, I like watching the blades turn."

I know. It's a dream - but a good one.

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