

## **The White Shadow Knows**

Dogs have many personalities. Some like to herd sheep, or small children, or even basketballs, like Sophia, my daughter-in-law, Kriston's, border collie. Some like to fetch balls, Frisbees, and small logs from a lake or river like Jake and Mae, my daughter, Laura's, black lab, or my daughter, Kelly's, shephard-sharpai mix. Others like my daughter, Michelle's, bichon frise shihtzu, Terabyte, or shihtzu yorki, Miss Lilly, like to just sit on your lap and be petted or have their ears scratched.

Most dogs are smarter than I am. They can weasel through a door or into my chair before I can claim my territory. And, they know how to get me to open the door or provide meals at the most inconvenient time. But, my wife, Jeannette's, Maltese, Buttons, is the smartest, most engaged dog I've ever known. He's ten years old, and is like the Farmers Insurance Company's commercial, "He's learned a thing or two, because he's seen a thing or two."

We first noticed that Buttons would bark at men when they carry a tool like an electric drill or a screwdriver. He would growl like he was about to attack and tear their arm off. But, he never carried out his threat. On the other hand, he loves women and always lets them pet him. He's so persistent about growling and barking at men with tools, we decided he must have been mistreated as a puppy by the husband of the woman who raised him.

As he grew older he began to engage in TV programs and the news. We frequently watch television with Buttons beside Jeannette in her chair, and he gets anxious when we watch detective and mystery shows with spooky music and people sneaking around. He quivers, and his eyes get large. If someone on TV wrestles with another person, fires a gun, or just hugs someone, he'll jump off the chair and lunge at the screen. We frequently must change the channel or turn the program off, because he becomes so excited.

The fascinating thing about his television watching is how involved he gets. He becomes wide-eyed, intent on every movement, and pants heavily. TV watching with him is like attending a melodrama. He keeps track of every person

and knows who the bad guy is before we do. Somehow, he senses the evil actors. And, they don't have to wear a black hat.

Buttons tries to warn us about the bad guys. I think his primary concern is to protect Jeannette, because when she goes shopping, leaving him and me alone, Buttons just falls asleep on the arm of my chair and ignores the TV.

Now that Jeannette and I are in a senior living facility, he has become a favorite of the many ladies here. He'll run through the halls to be petted and has several favorites he scratches on their door to see. He's even become friends with some of the men, unless they're carrying tools. I'm looking forward to Halloween next week when I plan to dress him in a black spider costume and release him on the tenants.

Having Buttons in our home is like living with the "The Shadow," except he's white, doesn't wear a hat or cloak, and barks, rather than speaking in a deep, threatening voice like the radio character.