

# THE DOG WHO ATE THE HOUSE

By John S. Halbert

About 1989, we decided it would be a good idea for our then five-year old son to have his first dog. He had been dropping some broad hints, so we headed for the dog pound. In the past all my dogs had been from the pound, and I always figured we got a better dog there compared to the fussy purebreds at the pet store. I guessed the dogs knew they had been rescued from an uncertain future, because our pets from the pound seemed to always give a little more respect and deference to humans. At least, I always thought so.

Someone told me a long time ago that to find the best dog in the place was to select a few prospects, place them in a holding area, and see which one acted the most people-friendly.

And that's how we came home with Tootsie. I'm not sure why we gave the dog that name, but there was a movie out by that name at the time, and for some reason, I guess the dog reminded us of Dustin Hoffman in drag.

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My elderly father-in-law decided the dog needed a house, so he gathered some scrap wood and built a doghouse in the backyard. Tootsie took to the shelter, and everything seemed fine.

But after a few weeks, I noticed that some of the wood around the base of the doghouse was missing. Pretty soon, the wooden skirt around the bottom was gone, and jagged holes appeared in the walls. Then, most of the floor vanished. The doghouse was disappearing.

Termites? Carpenter ants? What was going on? Tootsie didn't seem to be concerned in the slightest that her home was going to the wind.

The answer came one day when I was making my latest perplexed inspection. Tootsie trotted up, opened her mouth and threw up a load of lumber in front of where I stood.

That answered one question---but created another one: Why was the dog eating its house? We never solved the mystery. Not long afterwards, Tootsie ran away. Sometime later, a neighbor said he thought he had seen the dog at another house, many blocks away. But we never saw again saw Tootsie. All we had left to remember her by were little piles of lumber around the back yard and a half-eaten doghouse.