Daisy

My wife and I have had Scotties for many years. Through long acquaintance with the breed, we have come to the belief that they are close to being ideal dogs for those who live in the country. Though Scotties are terriers, they are not endowed with the highstrung, nervous temperament associated commonly with other breeds of the terrier clan; they have self-sufficient, independent, and somewhat willful personalities, that those who are not admirers of Scotties would criticize as the traits of a dour and stubborn nature. True, they are not fawning dogs; they do not insist on constant attention, as do some of the retriever class, nor do they make great demands on their masters, but contrary perhaps to accepted belief Scotties are extremely affectionate and loyal -- they come close to fitting the criteria of one-man dogs. They are small dogs too, which has many advantages, not the least of all being that they are easy traveling companions. And they are very clever and educable and adapt readily to new situations.

Our first two Scotties were males, and both met with unhappy ends because they had a tendency to roam. Our third Scottie was a female. Females do not wander like males; they stay home. We named her Daisy. She had a more pragmatic outlook on the world than did Linus our first, who was artistically inclined and used to sit on the wall in front of our house to watch the sunset. Daisy cared less for the abstract beauties of nature than for its material bounty. Her penchant for scavenging became rather troublesome at times when our neighbors were less scrupulous about the disposal of

their refuse than we wished they would be. Linus would howl in accompaniment with the classic music my wife played -- a measure of his artistic spirit for he sought out, not avoided, the room from which the music issued. Daisy never exhibited this interest. On the other hand, however, she became adept at the art of communication. Not only did she acquire a sizable auditory vocabulary which included words like Suppertime, Dog Bed, Walk, Car, Dog Bone, Talk, but also phrases such as What Would You Like, Shall We Go, What Have You To Say, Speak Up. In answer to words she would bark as a sort of insicive affirmative when the word implied that something she enjoyed was about to take place. To phrases she would howl back, prolonging through several exchanges her apparent pleasure in communication for its own sake with no anticipation of ultimate reward.

Car riding was one of Daisy's greatest joys and at the same time a most uncontainable anguish. Whenever my wife or I would put on our coats or would take the car keys out of the drawer in the kitchen where they were kept she would become very excited and eager to go out, and if we asked her "Would you like to go" or "Go to the car" she would become frantic with anticipation. All the short way to the garage she would be spinning around in uncontainable joy. Once in the car and on the way her whole demeanor changed. Sitting on the shelf behind the rear seat for all of the six miles to town she uttered the most pitiful soul-wrenching moans and groans as though she were suffering cruel torture.

Several summers ago we took Daisy to Maine. It was the first time that we had gone to our island since she became a member of the family. Daisy was a New Mexico scottie, born in the arid Southwest, knowing nothing of the sea, its fogs and tides, nothing of the North Atlantic climate which had been the background for her Scottish heritage. The Island was, I am sure, a revelation to Daisy -- if dogs have revelations. Never had she experienced before so much deep green grass, such damp woods filled with so many new and wonderful smells. A walk along a woodland trail was a never-ending adventure for Daisy. But most exciting of all new experiences for her -- an experience which I like to think awakened dim nostalgic racial memories of Scotland's rocky coast, of heather and breaking surf -- was the shore of the Island with its seaweeds and pungent fishy odors.

But most compelling of all the exotic contents of this strange environment for Daisy were the seabirds -- the gulls and especially the eider ducks. The gulls were too elusive to hold her attentions for long -- they flew when she rushed down the beach to attack them. The ducks behaved differently. They seldom took to the wing when pursued; they simply swam away from the lands. When, however, under extreme provocation they did fly it was always done to the accompaniment of much splashing and flapping which was in itself a provocative reaction to her charges and caused her to bark fiercely. On walks around the circumference of the Island Daisy was always as near the sea as she could get, either on

the beaches or on the rocky shore wherever it was accessable to the water. She was always on the lookout for ducks, I suppose hopeful that sometime she would be able to catch a duck unawares. At least she never gave up trying. Early in the summer her zeal lead to a rather traumatic surprise which she never forgot. Rafts of ducks move in-shore on a falling tide to feed. The yellow-brown seaweed grows only on rocky shores in the inter-tidal zone, which in Maine varies from nine to twelve feet, where at low tide it drapes all the rocks with a slippery blanket of interlacing, coarse rubbery stems. At high tide the six to seven foot long strands of seaweed float upwards from their attachments, buyed by hundreds of air bladders, to create swirling submarine algae forests. As the tide falls below the tops of the strands they form a thick floating mat on the surface which surrounds all the emerging rocks producing the false appearance of mud flats. Daisy was fooled by this apparent firmness of the seaweed and on this occasion when a group of ducks was feeding close to the shore dashed recklessly at them and promptly fell through the floating weed much to her astonishment. The chase ended there and then with the ducks simply swimming off and Daisy floundering back to land considerably encumbered by the entangling masses of aquatic vegetation. Never again did she make that mistake; forever after, with a caution born of frightening experience, she avoided all shoreline ambiguities.