

Follow the Dog Home: How A Simple Walk Unleashed an Incredible Family Journey

Bob Walsh

Kevin Walsh

Samantha Walsh

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If it were up to the Walsh family, *man's best friend* would more correctly be called *family's best friend*. In *Follow the Dog Home*, the love of dogs brings together three generations of the Walsh family, as father Bob, son Kevin, and granddaughter Samantha share their memories of beloved family pets. Their stories, told in simple, engaging terms, bring pet lovers on a familiar journey of delight, companionship, and loss.

While anyone who has ever loved a dog will certainly shed tears before the story is over, the Walshes do more than recount a linear succession of family pets. They frame their experiences in terms of the cyclical nature of life and the way dogs, as members of the family, help children and adults learn to deal with life's realities. Dogs give comfort and companionship while teaching responsibility and the fact that loss is tempered by love.

In *Follow the Dog Home*, the Walsh family's dogs lead each generation to understand what *home* means, but it is also through a particularly canine coincidence that the family's history comes full circle. Readers join Kevin Walsh in his journey as his walks with his current dog, Beverly, lead him to discover forgotten episodes in his family's past. Sharing what he learns with his father, Bob, brings context to the important place dogs occupy in the Walsh family: the love of dogs is a family legacy, a dominant gene passed down through generations.

While the stories do touch on emotional issues such as loss and dealing with grief, many of them are just great adventures. There's the time the family dog joined a fraternity ... or the time one of the dogs had a part-time job as a delivery truck "driver" ... all true stories that remind readers of the unexpected laughs dogs bring to families.

As might be expected, *Follow the Dog Home* is suitable for the whole family; in fact, it may be a good resource for parents and children in learning how different people cope with grief and loss. For each family dog the Walshes describe, there comes the moment when the reader will also have to face loss and share the family's sadness. Kevin, a professional sports broadcaster and author, uses his narrative skills to put life and loss in perspective. Meanwhile, the candid observations that Bob and his granddaughter Samantha share resonate with the reader because they are so open and frank. *Follow the Dog Home* is an affirmation of the special place so many dogs hold in families' lives.

BRITTANY DOWDLE (January 20, 2012)

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