



LARRY'S DOG DAYS OF SUMMER.....

You have to imagine the hottest, most humid day in the middle of August down in the hottest most humid day in the middle of August down in the “down ins” in the Ozark Mountains. Larry’s little niece, Ethel May, was spending a week with Larry and his wife Mabel. Larry said it was too hot to work, too hot to fish, and just plain old too hot! So he spent the day drinking beer and watching TV. He likes to alternate between professional wrestling and a local show called “Bass fishing secrets of your local pros: featuring a local bass fishing hero, Billy Joe Bob Wilcox. Larry always reminds folks of how he helped Billy Joe get started in bass fishing years ago, when Billy Joe was just knee high to a toadstool. But that’s another story.

The day came to an end, and Mabel hustled little Ethel May off to bed and after another beer or two, Larry and Mabel trundled off in the same direction. Larry was asleep in about 2 seconds, and so was Mabel. He slept so hard that when a dog started barking outside little Ethel May’s window at about 3 in the morning, he never even heard it. But Ethel May did. She put up with it for a while, but the dog was persistent, and finally, she crawled out of bed, and stumbled up the stairs to uncle Larry’s and aunt Mabel’s bedroom, where she pounded on the door, and said: “Uncle Larry, there’s a dog outside my window, and he’s barking so much, I can’t sleep....can you make him go away?” Larry rolled over and said, “Go throw some water on him”, and went back snoring. Mabel elbowed him, and said “Get up and throw water on him yourself!” Larry said “you go throw water on him, cause the dog ain’t botherin’ me, and I ain’t gittin’ up!” Mabel had lived with Larry for more years than she cared to remember, so she got up, stuffed her pajama legs down in her mud boots, and she and Ethel May went on downstairs to see about the dog. They went outside to find this cute, lonely looking, small black puppy just barking its head off, and when it saw them, it just started wagging its tail and acting for all the world like Mabel was its long lost momma. Mabel said “Shoo, dog”, a couple of half hearted times, but the dog just hung his head, let his ears drop, wagged his tail, and put this pathetic lonely look on its face, and of course Mabel couldn’t stand that. Ethel May said, “He’s so cute... can’t he come in the house?” “No way”, Mabel said. “Your uncle Larry would shoot us!” But maybe he’s hungry” Ethel May said. “Can we get him something to eat?” Mabel thought about it, and said, “Well, maybe if we feed him, he’ll go back home, wherever that is.” If there ever had been a contest to see who knew the most about what happened when you feed a stray dog. Mabel would have placed dead last! She went in the house and opened up a can of Dinty Moore’s beef stew, and poured half of it into a bowl, and took it back outside, to find Ethel May petting the dog and making friends with it. Ethel May looked up and said, “He’s lonely, Aunt Mabel....I think we should keep him!” “We can’t,” Mabel said. “He prob’ly belongs to someone, and Larry won’t have a dog in the house. We’ll leave the food here, and go back in the house.” They set the bowl of food down, and headed back for the house. Well, the dog had the stew gone in about 3 seconds, and was right behind them when they got to the screen door. “Can’t he come in?” asked Ethel May. “Maybe he’s thirsty!” “No!” Mabel said, but when she opened the door to go in, the dog scooted past her feet and headed for Ethel May’s room....”Can’t he just stay with me for the night, Aunt Mable.....Puhlllleeeeezzzeeee????....”Oh all right.” Mabel said, “But tomorrow, he’s gone! Let’s see if he wants any more to eat, and we’ll get some water for him, then you got to get back to bed!” So they poured the rest of the stew in the bowl, and set a bowl of water beside it. The dog ate the stew and drank about half the water, then followed little Ethel May to her bed, jumped up beside her, and curled up like he’d been doing it for years.

Mabel shut the door, and went back up to the bedroom. Larry stirred around and asked if she'd gotten rid of the dog.....Mabel just grunted, and they both went back to sleep.

Next morning, Larry got up and got ready to go help out his brother in law at the sawmill. As he went down the stairs, he noticed 2 bowls outside Ethel May's room! Now, Larry wasn't too brite, but he wasn't stupid either! He hollered up the stairs at Mabel and said, "You make sure that dawgs otta here when I git back! I don't want no dang dawg in my house!" He got in his truck, fired it up, and headed for the sawmill. He got there, and spent most of the day telling folks how to do their jobs, and setting a good example on how to avoid work, while at the same time letting folks know that it was a good thing that he was around to make sure things "got done right!" Well, because of the heat, they closed the sawmill early, and Larry headed home. When he got there, and walked in the front door he noticed that the 2 bowls were still there....He tromped up the stairs and hollered at Mabel, "That stupid dawg ain't still here, is it?" Mabel came out of the kitchen, and looked at him out of the corner of her eye and said, "Nope....he's gone." And she went back in the kitchen just a *little* too quickly for Larry's peace of mind....Larry looked at her suspiciously, and asked "And just exactly *where* did he get gone to, Mabel Sue?" Well, Mabel just looked at Larry and gave him this wonderfully bright eyed and radiantly hopeful smile and said, "To the Vet....." Larry gave her his best look of disbelief, and said WHAT?!?!?!? There was a moment of silence, with Mabel staring at Larry with this goofy smile on her face and Larry turning redder by the minute.... "Just how did he get to the vet, Mabel?" Larry asked. Ethel May popped her head around from the kitchen, and said "We had to take him Uncle Larry and it was darned good thing we did because the vet said that he needed to be "fixed!" Larry's eyes bugged out....."FIXED?????" He yelled. Then he looked at Mabel, and said "And just who's paying to get this stupid dawg fixed????? Mabel didn't say anything, and besides, Larry already knew the answer. He just said "DANG" and started to turn away, but Ethel May stopped him when she said "And besides that we gotta hurry Uncle Larry because if we don't get him picked up before 6, he'll have to stay overnite, and that costs 15 dollars!!" Well, Larry didn't say a word. He just headed for the truck, fired it up, and sat there waiting. Mabel and Ethel May climbed in, and they went to the Vet's office about 10 miles down the road.

"That'll be 250 dollars Larry", the vet smiled. The he said, "and that includes the operation, all his shots, tags, a box of doggie treats, 3 rawhide bones, one o'them new fangled retractable leashes, and a brand new "Love Your Pet" doggie carrier just in case he doesn't travel well. And listen, be careful not to jog him around too much on the way home, cause he's one sore pup!" Larry just glared at him, muttered something about "one sore vet", and wrote a check. Then he turned to Mabel and said with a sigh, "you *know* that this is gonna be yer anniversary present for the next 10 years, don't cha?" Then he turned and headed for the truck. Mabel smiled at Ethel May and said, "See...I told you he'd get over it!" She scooped up the groggy doggy and they all piled into the truck for the short ride home, where Mabel and Ethel May just fawned all over the dog, trying to sooth it, and at the same time come up with a suitable name. Larry suggested "stupid", and Mabel gave him a look and told him to be quiet. Then she said "I think we'll call him Theodore...(Larry rolled his eyes)...that way we can call him Teddy for short....After all he kind of looks like a little Teddy boy, don't you think?" Larry rolled his eyes again. Ethel May said "It's perfect, Aunt Mabel."

Four days later, poor teddy still wasn't feeling too good, so Mabel took him back to the vet. Turns out he had some sort of infections, and needed some antibiotics. The vet only charged Larry 1/2 price too...A week later, Teddy *still* wasn't up and around, so they took him back to the vet yet another time! This time the doc re-openend the poor dog up, and cleaned him out, and sent him home again. Well everything worked out, and Teddy was up and around in no time, and getting friskier by the day. Mabel and Ethel May even drove to Springfield to the Big Petsmart Store, and took Teddy Shopping. Mable bought him his own little doggie bed, and his own little doggie bowl, and his own little doggie leash, and about a half dozen little doggie chew toys....Ol' Ted had it made all right....And the dog began to have a strange effect on Larry's cats....Both of them started shedding a lot more, and one day, one

of them decided that it would be wiser to live on top of the kitchen table. No big deal....But the other cat developed the habit of pulling its own white fur out by the mouthful and leaving it in piles on anything dark in the house. And both cats started barfing stuff up on anything that belonged to Larry..... it was almost like they were trying to get even for bringing a retarded dog in the house. But Mabel sure loved that little Teddy dog, and Teddy loved her...Even after they came home one day and found that Teddy had chewed up a pair of her "Sunday go to meetin' shoes"...When she said "Bad dog", Teddy just dropped his head, let his ears flop down, got this forlorn look on his face, and Mabel couldn't say anything except "Awwwwwww".... And then teddy developed an appetite for Kleenex boxes. If he could get one, he'd just chew up the box, and have a great old time shredding and chewing up tissues all over the house. Then he decided he'd rather eat cat food than the expensive dog food that Mabel put out for him. Mabel had to feed the cats at night, right when Teddy went to bed, in order for the cats to have a chance at it. And then there was the day that Teddy chewed the cork handle off of Larry's favorite flippin' stick...Needless to say, that did not go over well *at all!!!* And every time Teddy rode in the car, he'd have to be right there on Mabel's lap, where she'd be petting, and hugging, and smooching on him, and just spoiling him rotten in general, all the time telling teddy what a *good* boy he was, and asking Larry "Isn't he a good boy? He's such a goooooood boy! He's such a goooooood boy! What a goooooood boy! Just look at him Larry; he's such a goooooood boy! And he's soooooooo cute! Aren't you Teddy boy?" And on and on and on and on and on and onAnd at night, when she and Larry went to bed, Mabel had to tuck Teddy into his little bed, right beside theirs, and go thru the whole routine again! Larry just did his best to live with it, and figured if it kept Mabel happy, maybe he could spend more time on the lake without her griping about his leaving all the time.

Mabel got to be in such a good mood, that she actually asked Larry to take her fishing one day...It just about shocked Larry out of his socks, but he agreed. He'd always wanted to impress Mabel with his fishing skills. So he got the boat ready, put in two tackle boxes, a rod for Mabel, and 5 for him, stuck the net under the console, hitched the boat to the truck, and hollered for Mabel to hurry up! And, she did. She came out of the house carrying Larry's little cooler for his beer, 2 sack lunches, and leading Teddy on a leash.....Now, Larry wasn't figuring on having a dog in the boat, but when he thought about how accidents might happen, he figured it might be ok if the dog did come along. Who knew.....maybe the dog would fall overboard, and get eaten by Mugwump! Just the thought made Larry smile to himself.

Well, they drove 45 minutes to the lake, with Mabel going on nonstop about Teddy and what a goooooood boy he was, and how smart and how cute he was. Larry just concentrated on not getting sick.....They got to the lake, backed the boat in, and headed out across the water. Teddy liked the wind in his face and seemed to enjoy being on the boat. Of course, Teddy liked being anywhere, as long as Mabel was there too. Larry got Mabel's rod all ready for her, but she said she just wanted to sit and hold Teddy and watch Larry fish for a while, then she'd try. Well, Larry figured that was ok, so he flipped the little magnifying glass down on the bill of his cap, and hooked up all five of his rods the way he wanted them; one with a gitzit, one with a kalins grub, one with a deep running bomber, one with a plastic worm, and the last one with his triple jointed super extra rattling, imitation dying shad trapper crank bait. It was a bass lure that he invented and made himself, and he claimed that if anything got old mugwump, that would be the bait that did it. Then he told Mabel to pay attention, because she was gonna see some serious fishin'!

While standing in the front of the boat, with one foot on the trolling motor, Larry eased the boat to within about 30 feet of the bank, and began casting, and at the same time explaining to Mabel all about the fine art of bass fishing, and telling her to watch real close, because there was a lot of people that would consider themselves *extremely* fortunate to have the chance to pick up tips from a person as experienced as himself! While he was going on, there was a movement and a splash about 20 yards down the bank, and they all, including Teddy, turned to see what it was. "Just a muskrat" Larry said. "Looks like he's swimming right toward us.....and indeed the muskrat was! He swam along the shoreline, just a few feet out from the bank, and when the little guy got almost in front of the boat,

Teddy let out a little “growf”, and leaped off of Mabels lap, right into the water where he started paddling furiously for the muskrat! Mabel let out a shriek, jumped off of her seat, and smacked right into Larry, knocking his rod out of his hands into the lake, and causing his foot to stomp on the trolling motor pedal, which caused the boat to swerve and lurch suddenly toward the middle of the lake! When Larry regained his balance, Mabel was furiously yanking on his arm and hollering at him to turn the stupid boat around and get Teddy before he drowned! Well, by this time, Teddy had gotten close enough to the muskrat to scare it, and it dove under the water, which of course totally baffled the dog. So he just climbed out on the bank, where he shook himself off, and peed on a rock. Then he looked out at Mabel and Larry foundering around on the boat, and started barking. Larry had gotten Mabel calmed down, and headed the boat for the rocky shore. As they approached the bank, Larry held up the trolling motor so the prop wouldn’t get damaged on the rocks, and Mabel was on her knees with her arms held out calling Teddy. And for the first time in his life, Teddy came when he was called! He just jumped right in, and swam for Mabel! Well, Larry just stopped the trolling motor, and he figured to wait for the stupid dog to get to the boat. Which is what happened. Then Mabel reached in and grabbed Teddy by the collar and hoisted him right into the boat. She kind of lost her balance just a little, so she reached out an arm to steady herself, and put her hand right down on the trolling motor pedal, which of course made the boat swerve and lurch.....and it flipped Larry right out of the boat, slicker than a snake eating an egg! Of course Mabel started panicking again, but she did take her hand off the pedal. Larry was sputtering and splashing wildly just a few feet away. Teddy was barking at him, and Mabel was just beside herself! She picked up one of Larry’s remaining rods, and of course it got hooked up on the other three. She yanked and shook and pulled on them till finally three of them came loose and fell into the lake. She stuck the other one out to Larry, who grabbed hold of it, and pulled himself to the boat and hung on. Now it’s not an easy thing for an old out of shape hillbilly to get out of the lake and into a bass boat! Larry gave it a try, but the best he could do was rock the boat so much that his tackle box and little cooler fell overboard. He thought about trying to grab one, but figured he’d be better off hanging on to the boat. So he just yelled at Mabel till she quit hollering, and then told her to sit down and hang on to Teddy... When she did, he pulled himself up to the nose of the boat, and reached up and pushed on the trolling motor pedal with his hand, and headed the boat toward the shore. He tried to stop the boat before it reached the bank, but didn’t do too well, and the trolling motor shaft got wedged between a couple of rocks. He climbed out on the bank, stepped back into the boat, and yanked the trolling motor shaft out of the rocks, bending it in the process. Then he took a can of red spray paint out of the rod box, and sprayed a big X on a rock, so he’d know where to look for his rods. He got Mabel and Teddy situated, fired up the old Evinrude, and headed for the ramp. Needless to say when they got back to the ramp, and it finally sunk in that he had lost not just one, but 4 of his rods, his tackle box and his beer, he was not a happy camper. Actually, the only one of the three that seemed to be in a good frame of mind, was good old Theodore....And all the way home, Mabel reminded him that he was such a goooooood dog.....

Well, you’d have thought that would have been the end of the story....Larry had taken some local kids back to the lake and paid them 20 dollars each to dive for his equipment. They got 3 of the 4 rods, which mollified him somewhat. He even got his tackle box back, but it surely was a mess!!! And he figured his brother in law might be able to straighten out the trolling motor shaft, if he’d pay him a few bucks.

When he got back to the house, he noticed Mabel up the hill taking to the neighbor, who was gesturing rather emphatically. Mabel walked back to the house carrying Teddy in her arms. As Larry was getting out of his truck, she looked at him with wide eyes and said excitedly, “Boy, I thought we were gonna have a problem there!” “Why?” asked Larry, as he looked toward the neighbor, who appeared to be laughing as he walked back toward his house. “ Well,” Mabel said, “Teddy ran off up to ol’ McHaffie’s house again, and I went up to get him. I went and picked him up, and McHaffie came out of the house and asked me where I got the dog!” “So what,” chuckled Larry? “Maybe he wants to buy one just like him!” “No,” said Mabel, “anyway, I told him the dog sort of adopted us...then he said that the dog sure looked an awful lot like the one that dug its way out of their back yard about a

month back! Then he said that his kids really missed that dog...But *he* didn't!" He said him and his wife couldn't *stand* the dog! He said the dog barked all the time, chewed up everything in the house, would never obey, kept digging up the back yard, and he never wanted to see that dog again! He just hoped the kids didn't see *this* one, and think it was theirs. He said they used to call *their* dog Chico. Then he said, "If that *is* Chico, he's yours cause I danged sure don't want him! I was all set to get him fixed, but like I said, he dug his way out. Prob'ly knew he was headed for the vet!" He said his wife bought him a new used trolling motor with the money they saved in vet bills! Mabel was *really* excited now..... "Isn't this wonderful???....he's ours for sure now, Larry! Ain't you Teddy boy? You're such a goooooood boy...you're so cuuute....ain't he just soooooo cute Larry?" ☺