

# Weekending with Maggie

By Rachel Eisner

"Rachel's here, Maggie, Rachel's here! She came just to take care of you!" chortles Jim Segalof as he dances with Maggie, hands holding paws while dancing in place. Maggie ignores me and follows Barbara Segalof at her heels while the dog's surrogate mother checks on her bag for last minute items. When Mrs. Segalof heads towards the stairs, Maggie leaps and bounds up the stairs and waits at her owners's bedroom door before jumping up on her bed. Within ten minutes, the Segalof's have packed all their gear and pause to leave the veterinarian's number and say goodbye to Maggie, of course. Barbara tells her "to be a good girl for Rachel" while Jim assumes the more patriarchal tactic, explaining, "we'll just be gone a few days" and does the usual - the forty something attorney, father of two who are now in their

twenties, stoops to his knees, bidding, "do you have a kiss for Daddy?" and Maggie, a two year old Cocker Spaniel, jumps up and licks her owner's face until he remorsefully stands up and she can no longer reach. After the retrieval of road directions, and second farewells to Maggie, the front door actually closes: it is a one woman/one dog weekend.

Immediately, Maggie scampers over to the living room couch and leaps up so she can see out the window. "Doggone it all!" Mom and Pop Segalof have left the den and now Rachel is leader of the pack. Momentarily unsettled, the pup barks frantically and darts back and forth, hoping to catch a glimpse of "mommy" and "daddy". I reassure her that the Segalofs will return on Sunday in time for her six o'clock quickie in the backyard. We can do cool stuff, like play fetch with beat up saliva filled tennis balls and eat

biscuits or drink coffee. Insufficient answer. Maggie defiantly puts her paw down and lets me know she is serious. I respond to her separation anxiety with an offer she could not bark about, "Mags, lets go for a walk!" Euphorically wagging her tail, Maggie plods over to the doorway where she butts her head against the leash. The squirming, tail wagging bundle curls her upper lip in a toothy canine smile and jumps up to give me a sloppy lick on the nose before pulling me out the door.

Certainly not a passive puppy, Maggie sniffs out all the action and makes sure she gets her fair share. Upon returning from our midday trot, I open the back door of my car to retrieve a tape, and before I can say "cat" Mags has climbed into the back seat and discovered the leftover crumbs of yesterday's stop at Dunkin' Donuts. Being the good nature rascal that she is, Maggie does not bark up a storm when I tell her that this is "no free ride." Maggie just hops out and prances towards the Segalof's front door, not too let down for last sniffs and territorial markings.

Maggie has her pet peeves, but she's a doggone good companion. Nothing fishy or ape-like about this one. Ok, so she's a little nosy sometimes. It's easier to take a shower without a curious canine. And, all right, once in a while I would not mind having the covers all to myself. I still do not know how she always finagles two biscuits from Rudy the Mailman. Maggie never was one to come home empty mouthed.

Maggie doesn't care if I come to work in jeans and wear the same T-shirt three days in a row or if I play Billy Joels' song "Honesty" ad infinitum. She likes playing outside while I get a tan and read about variables and media trends. Fetch. Tug of war. Escape into Dogmania. Maggie is great company. She doesn't talk too much, and never barks up the wrong tree.

Weekending with Maggie in Westville is fun. Dog sitting is cool. And it pays. You can sleep on the job, watch HBO, and have the house all to yourself. All you need are two feet, a sense of responsibility, and reasonable expectations.



by Russ Koback

