

Linda Coggin

ON THE CANINE INSPIRATION BEHIND *THE DOG, RAY*

The inspiration for my book *The Dog, Ray* was, without a doubt, our own dog—the handsome Beezle. Beezle is a thirteen-year-old lurcher, just a tiny bit older than Daisy, the girl in the story, who is twelve.

Beezle has a companion, the very large Pixie, an Irish wolfhound. Living with Pixie is not like living with a dog—more a bear or a small horse. She doesn't do many dog things.

Beezle, on the other hand, loves doing all that stuff. He likes chasing things, barking at things, fetching things, chewing things, and lying around a lot. He is loving and loyal, some of the qualities I wanted to show in Daisy/Ray.

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Beezle is always busy being a dog.

Because I've been observing him for so long, he helped me to give Daisy/Ray "the *dog thing*." I think unless you can spend time with dogs, you don't notice the small details about them—the expressive way they can use their ears, for instance. What their tail is doing and what it may mean. What makes them happy.

I've learned a lot about the fantastic things that guide dogs can do for their owners, too. Like alerting them, if they are diabetic, that their blood-sugar level is low, or taking laundry out of the machine and putting it in a basket. And I've talked with homeless people living on the streets with their dogs about how the saying "A dog is a man's best friend" definitely applies to them.

I'm sure if Beezle had been another sort of dog (and without the anthropomorphic qualities I've given him, of course!), *The Dog, Ray* would have been quite a different story. In fact, it may not have been a story at all. He has let me into the world of dogs that Daisy has to enter.

I have really loved writing this book and I hope whoever reads it enjoys it, too. I've tried reading bits of it to Beezle, and though it looks as if he's politely listening, I think his mind is racing through the cornfields after a rabbit or digging up some bone he buried a few weeks back.



ART BY CHLOE COGGIN