



Now try reading to YOUR dog...

Read to your dog!

When you tuck your best friend into his basket at night, do you read him a bedtime story? One man found his dog enjoyed being read to so much that he decided to pen his own tales for a canine audience - and you can now read them to your dog too!

LONY RUHMANN from South Pasadena, California, began reading to his dog Juve (pronounced Hoo-vee) when he was a puppy seriously ill with distemper. "I read him little booklets called *Soul Flights* that are spiritually focussed booklets on how to live life," said Lony. "The words relaxed him, but one booklet about sharing he did not like."

Poor Juve was ill with distemper for six months, but with the help of an animal communicator friend, Lony learned how to listen to his dog and respond back, to aid his recovery, and reading formed a part of this healing process.

"The effects of the disease were harsh," remembers Lony. "Juve could not stand up on his own and had to be fed via a baby bottle."

Juve made a full recovery despite the odds and Lony decided to try writing stories specifically for dogs. Seven years later, his first book for dogs - *Bite This Book* - was complete.

Lony found that short stories were better suited to a dog's attention span, so his book is made up of a number of vignettes. Lony had to consider how writing for a canine audience would differ from writing for a human audience. "You have to keep the words and concepts simple," said Lony. "The best way to write to a dog is to write to their spirit and to their heart. They say the best food is the food cooked with love and the best dog writing is that written with love."

"As I embarked on writing a book specifically to be read to dogs, Juve kept interjecting. He wanted to tell his fellow dogs that he is happy, that he is strong, that he is playful and full of zest. He wanted to be the author, so the vignettes are primarily his stories, primarily his words, about his love of life."

Bite This Book is a groundbreaking concept, but not everyone has been able to embrace the idea of a book for dogs.

"I've had friends not answer or return phone calls after receiving the manuscript and there was a friend who was so touched, he cried after reading it. A few editors and agents have responded in a very insulting manner - a lady this week was disgusted by both the concept and the execution. On the other hand, there have been professionals who have told me it is lovely or very touching."

Despite these knockbacks, Lony has continued approaching publishers and is now looking outside the USA. "There is a publisher in India who is interested and will let me know within a month," said Lony. "There is also an agent in South Africa who is looking into representing it. *Bite This Book* has been translated into French and letters have just been sent out to several French publishers. So far the feedback has been mostly very nice. Someone said that my path seems to be like that of the American jazz musicians who had to go outside of the States for acknowledgment and

support. Many people here are in a rush and reading to a dog is the opposite of being in a rush."

Juve is a very sociable dog and Lony is in the process of setting up a website with the goal of having 1,001 different species connected and united via the internet. "Juve sees this as a way of creating and supporting harmony and balance in the animal kingdom," explained Lony. "He gets along well with animals from different species. At an old Spanish Mission here in California, Juve had a long discussion with a horse. The horse lowered his face all the way down to Juve's level, which was quite a sight. We went on a vacation and he made friends with a cow. When we go walking, sometimes we see wild animals, like raccoons, and one magical and spooky night a wolf appeared." Juve's website, when completed, will be available at www.1001animalfriends.com.

Lony believes that we should all be reading to our dogs, as it strengthens the bond between us and is great for a dog's self-esteem. "When you trust that the dogs will understand the story, they feel the trust," said Lony. "Reading to your dog opens the door for better communication and it's a terrific way to share. It can show a dog in a new way that we are all connected, and as humans it can help us to relax."

Lony has given us a sneak preview of *Bite This Book* so you can test the stories out on your pets. Next time you put your dog to bed, try reading him one of these doggie tales and let us know what he thinks. ::

Sometimes I just have to kiss you
Sometimes,
I just have to kiss you.
Your face is close to mine
And I forget about everything
And I kiss
And kiss
And kiss you.

I have a
Big, big
Love for you.
Inside,
You make me twinkle
And sometimes,
I just have to kiss you.

Happy Walk
Happy Walk.
Many smells.
Let me smell.
No hurry,
I take a loooong time to smell.

I like the flower smell,
The tree and grass smell.
Most of all,
I love the doggie,
Pee pee smell.

I love to pee pee many, many
times.
The best smell of all smells
Is MY pee pee smell.
I am the boss.
My pee pee is everywhere.

I meet another dog in the park.
I like dog and say,
Let's be friends. Let's sniff each
other.
Sit down on the grass with me.
I want to look at the other dogs
with you.

I say goodbye to dog and we
walk some more.
My body relaxes.
It's time to take a big, big poop.
Ah, feel so much better.
You praise my big poop.
I run with joy.

We go home now. I love my
loooong walk.
You talk to me.
You sound sweet. You sound
happy.
I am happy too.
I love to walk with you.

All alone on his bed
Where have you been?
I've been waiting for you.
Be with me,
Come be with me.
Touch me
(Sighs)
I have peace now.