

8 TIPS FOR PET SURVIVAL IN A NATURAL DISASTER

MARCH/APRIL 2001

PetLife

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WHY
DOES MY DOG...

WHY
DOES MY CAT...

THE MANY FACES
OF MR. WINKLE





The amazing Mr. Winkle

By Terry L. Wilson

Recently, I covered a star-studded event, the Actors & Others For Animals Celebrity Fashion Show, for *PetLife* magazine. The paparazzi were like sharks on a feeding frenzy — they elbowed, they shoved and they pushed, all jockeying to get the best shot as the beautiful people of Hollywood passed by their cameras.

It was then that I was witness to the unthinkable. Suddenly, shutters stopped clicking and the strobes went dark. A confused look came over the film and television personalities that were only moments ago smiling oh so sincerely for the press.

All heads turned to see what had caught the attention of these fanatic photographers. Murmurs of ... "What in the world?" ... "Is that real?" ... "It's gotta be a toy" ... echoed throughout the crowd.

In the blinking of an eye, the press stampeded in its direction, abandoning the still posing stars. Never in all of my years as a writer and photographer have I seen hard-core paparazzi react to anyone or anything like this before.

The object of their attention was the nation's hottest new pinup. No, it wasn't a sexy starlet or handsome hunk. The reason for all this excitement was a ... well ... it's kind of like ... actually, describing this phenomenon is almost beyond description.

Mr. Winkle is its name, and although we're pretty sure it's a member of the canine family, there are rumors to the effect that he may also be part teddy bear or the missing link from a Japanese cartoon. Adding to the confusion over this incredible pooch's origin, his human, Lara Jo Regan, says he may also have come to earth from outer space.

One only has to glance at this furry critter to realize that all of these hypotheses have a chance of being true. The one common denominator to this uncommon character is the fact that Mr. Winkle

is without a doubt the most adorable looking dog ever to wag a tail. Of all of his many interesting features, none stands out more than his tongue. It's either too big for his mouth, or perhaps his mouth is too small for his tongue. Whatever the case, Mr. Winkle considers it his most glamorous feature.

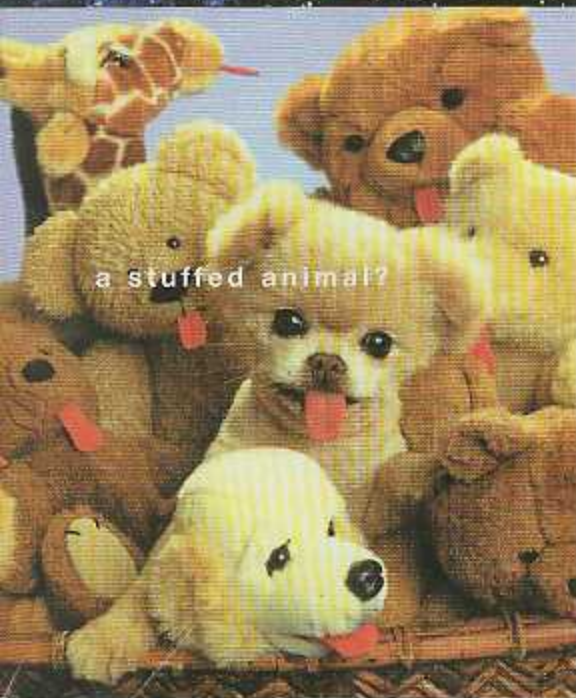
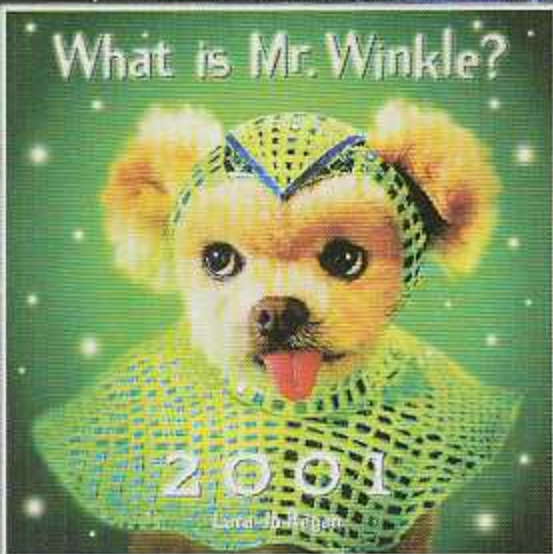
Adding to the uniqueness of Mr. Winkle's story is the way in which dog and owner found each other. Lara, who by trade is an award-winning photographer for many national and international publications, was on assignment in Bakersfield, California, when fate introduced her to this most unusual dog.

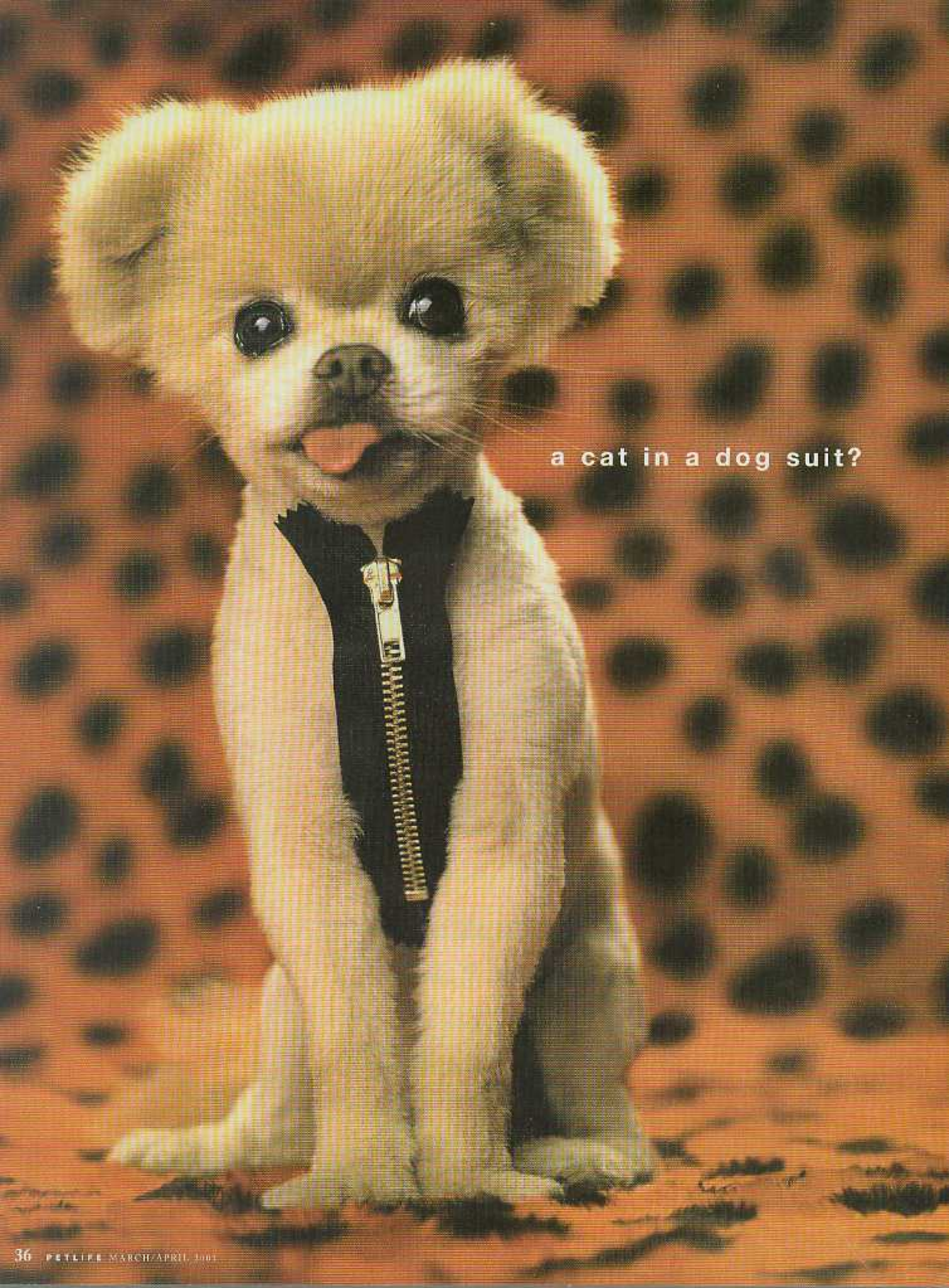
"It was very late. I was tired and cruising the outskirts of the city looking for a place to get some coffee before I got on the freeway to Los Angeles," Lara explained. "I got lost in an industrial area, and it was there that I saw this little furry thing laboring on the side of the road. I was baffled as to what it was so I stopped my car and got out to investigate. He saw me and hobbled toward the car. At that time, I recognized it as something that resembled a dog, but I wasn't positive at first. It could have been a mini alien in a cheap doggie disguise, as they've been known to land in isolated areas."

Upon closer inspection, Lara realized the clump of fur to be a dog not an invader from Mars. She also noticed that the homeless hound was in very bad shape.

"He had numerous cuts and bruises, his ear and mouth was infected and he had terrible teeth," Lara observed. "It was obvious the dog had been terribly neglected, and he wasn't wearing a tag so I brought him home, and we've been together ever since."

It took almost a year for Lara to bring her dog back to maximum health and happiness. In less than 12 months, Mr. Winkle had been transformed from an ugly duckling into a swan. Ironically, Lara had always been a cat person, so for her to





a cat in a dog suit?

have a dog, let alone to save a stray off the streets, was truly an amazing twist of fate.

"I've always been a cat person," Lara said. "I never expected to have a dog because of my busy work schedule. I never thought a dog would be an ideal pet for me. Now I realize that we were meant to be together, and I wouldn't trade him for the world."

Lara was quick to notice how strangers and friends alike reacted to her unusual looking pet. It was the extreme reactions of others toward Mr. Winkle that sparked the idea for her to promote his one-of-a-kind image in a calendar and posters.

"People would see Mr. Winkle and say, 'Is that a puppet? ... It can't be real ... It's a stuffed animal, isn't it?' I drew upon these comments to create different images using Mr. Winkle as my model for a calendar."

Everywhere Lara and Mr. Winkle traveled, people would stop them and offer their opinions as to his origin. And just when Lara thought she had heard every possible explanation under the sun, someone would come up with something new. It was the insight of strangers that helped to foster many of the costumes and images that have made Mr. Winkle's calendar a must-have item.

The Mr. Winkle calendar is a series of photographs celebrating the many faces of the insanely cute pooch. Each image is a hilarious and adorable interpretation of what this chameleonic little canine could be: a wind up toy ... a hamster with a perm ... an ancient demon. The "What is Mr. Winkle?" calendar and poster feature 12 images from the series, all shot by Lara. As one of the nation's most sought after photographers, Lara used her camera to capture the personality of her newly found friend.

"Mr. Winkle is so inspiring and has such an amazing look, he brings out the humor and imagination in others," says Lara. "The calendar is a celebration of Mr. Winkle's ability to promote joy and fun in life."

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but in Mr. Winkle's case, a Kodak moment with him is also a proven ratings winner. From the moment his kisser hit the paper in Los Angeles, this hound was hounded by the media. From local television gigs to guest shots with Rosie and features on CNN, Mr. Winkle is currently Hollywood's top dog.

"When we attended the Actors & Others Fashion Celebrity Show, the press literally ran over the stars that were there to get pictures of Mr. Winkle," recalled Lara. "It was one of the funniest things I've seen. But that's the magic of Mr. Winkle. Wherever we travel, he gets that kind of attention."

Rumors are rampant throughout Tinsel Town with whisperings of film deals and sitcoms as agents and studio moguls clamor to get Mr. Winkle's paw print on one of their contracts. It's been said that doggie superstars like Lassie, Beethoven and Moose from "Frasier" are all frantically trying to extend their contracts before they fall in the wake of Mr. Winkle's tidal wave of success.

"In addition to all of the attention Mr. Winkle is getting from the media, he is an even bigger hit on the Internet," says Lara. "We are getting in excess of 20,000 hits a day on our site. People are buying the calendar like crazy."

Mr. Winkle's Web site affords fans a chance to see this one-of-a-kind dog in action via a four-minute film clip. And for those who want to have a little more Winkle in their life, Lara has produced an eight-minute video of her famous pal that can be purchased for \$8.

In addition to the calendar, the videos and the posters, Lara has added Mr. Winkle greeting cards to his growing resume of products.

"It's so neat to know that people are getting Winkle greetings in their homes," Lara said proudly. "And they're selling like hot cakes."

When asked about Mr. Winkle's age, Lara said that because he was an abandoned dog, there is no way to know for sure; however, she estimates that he is somewhere in the middle of his life.

In just over 24 months, Mr. Winkle has gone from being a homeless mutt surviving one day at a time on the mean streets of Bakersfield to being the most pampered and celebrated dog in the world.

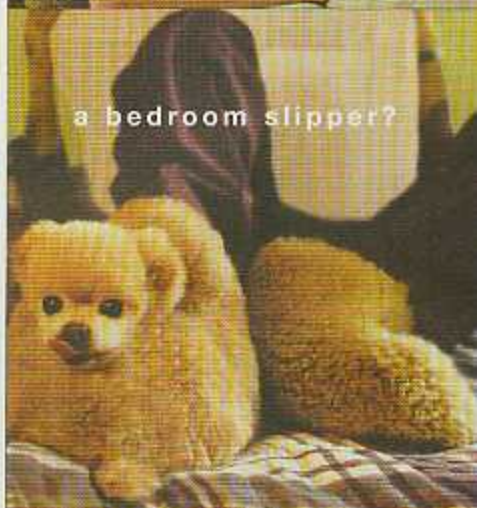
Lara says Mr. Winkle is taking his fame in stride and seems to enjoy meeting press and fans alike. In fact, Lara thinks that their meeting and subsequent success may be more than just luck or a coincidence.

"I feel like I'm just a vessel through which the Winkle magic is processed," Lara theorized. "If Mr. Winkle didn't enjoy all of the attention, I'd give it all up in a minute just to keep him with me forever. He has changed my life profoundly. I'm a very shy person, and everywhere I go with Mr. Winkle, there is all this love and joy coming at you because of him. He brings out the best in people, and on a personal level, this adorable little dog has shown me how to love unconditionally. He's like a little angel and every day my life is a little better because of Mr. Winkle."

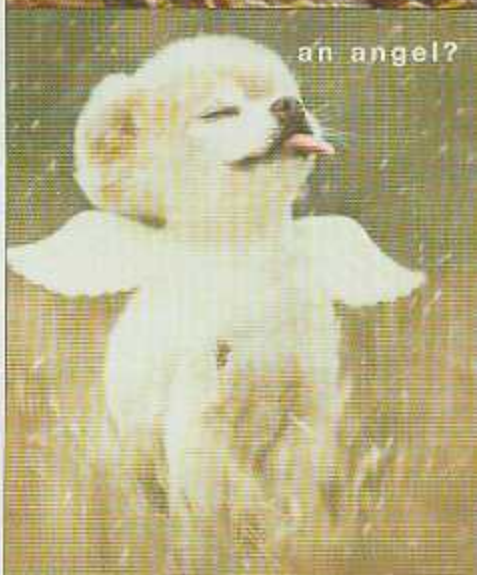
Mr. Winkle can be seen online
at www.mrwinkle.com.



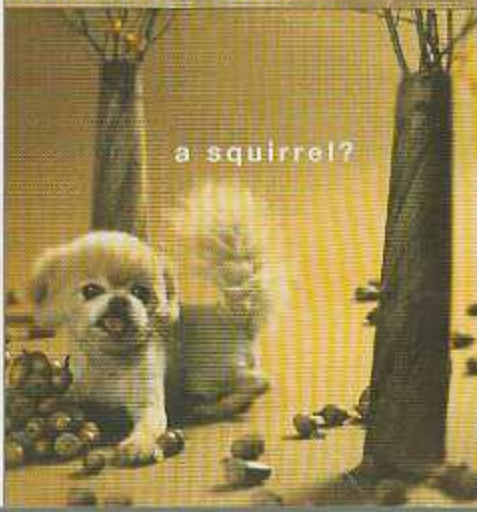
a bedroom slipper?



an angel?



a squirrel?





an ancient koala?