

Howie Schneider

As a nationally syndicated cartoonist, Howie often had occasion to draw and celebrate dogs. In his "Bimbo's Circus" strip Howie created a dog who could talk. The only problem was, the dog could only utter obscenities and so he was always being dragged from the stage.

But Howie wasn't a true dog person until we met, in Provincetown in 1985. The first time I visited Howie at his East End home, my old Irish setter Amos made himself comfortable on Howie's couch. Howie was smitten, and Amos and I moved in not long after that. Not only did the couch belong to Amos alone, Howie and I ended up doing a kids' book titled "Amos: The Story of an Old Dog and His Couch," (Little, Brown) inspired by a night of goofing around about how Amos, who never seemed to leave the couch except for walks and meals, might secretly be following us around town on it. Three more Amos books followed, and an animated version of Amos appeared on Shelley Duvall's bedtime stories, narrated by Morgan Freeman.

After Amos came Louie, a lab mix whose distinctive looks invited constant inquiries as to his breed. Howie dubbed him a "Bavarian Crotchsmeller." By the time we brought Louie into our home Howie was already a goner, dog-wise. He sang to Louie, cooked for Louie, made countless drawings of him, and finally produced "Chewy Louie," (Rising Moon) a goofy dog lover's tale that outlives Louie himself and was featured on Oprah.

Howie believed dogs deserved to be everywhere humans are, and his impatience with dog intolerance inspired the children's book "No Dogs Allowed," (Putnam) in which a family desperate to have their dog with them at a fancy hotel dresses the dog up as a mysterious Frenchman. For a book party at an Orleans bookshop Howie made picket signs and we rounded up enough people who were more than willing to line the sidewalk with placards reading "Let the Dogs In" and "Dogs Are People, Too."

When it was time to bring home a successor to our precious Louie we decided to adopt a shelter dog. A Petfinder search led us to male and female Louie look-alikes, siblings and an unbreakable set who, at five years old, were tough to place. But we felt like we hit the jackpot. Howie promptly renamed them Manny and Fanny, and he adored and cherished them so insanely he once remarked, "I love them so much I feel like I'm breaking some law." Howie soon filled the house with Manny and Fanny cartoons and portraits, and it was only a matter of time before a Manny and Fanny book would be born; Howie was nursing some ideas for one at the time of his unexpected death in June 2007.

Fortunately dog lovers, Howie left us with enough books, comic strips, and, of course, all those Provincetown Banner cartoons, to keep tails thumping for a long, long time. I'm deeply honored, as I know Howie would be, that the dog park is dedicated to his memory.

-- Susie Seligson, 10/6/07