

The Story of

HOOCH the POOCH  
(the white Labrador Retriever)

# COMING HOME

Number One

In a series of the adventures of Hooch

And

His friends, his family, the animals  
he meets, and how he learns to be  
a good dog



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*as told and illustrated with original  
photos by Joel Kevin Twist*

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*Dedicated to my wife and constant anchor in the sea of life  
Sharon*

**Introduction** – From my earliest memory, I was fascinated by the stories of “Uncle Remus” by Joel Chandler Harris and “Black Beauty” written by Anna Sewell. The characters contained in these books, mostly animals, spoke volumes of real life situations to my youthful mind. Somehow, the complex intended analogies by these authors were lost in my youthful innocence and I simply related to the characters as they were portrayed. Now, in retirement, the complex interactions of adult society seem wearisome and plastic to me and I yearn for the simple idealism of my youth.

The character chosen to communicate these basic life values to a new generation, is Hooch, a white Labrador Retriever. By the very fact of his color there exists a connotation of a dog that is different. After all, who ever heard of a white Lab? We all know what a black Lab is, and pictures of yellow and chocolate colored Labradors fill the pages of catalogs, magazines and commercials on television. A white Lab, that sure is different! Will he be accepted? What if he does not fit in? Not only does he get into all kinds of problems due to his own inquisitive nature, but how he gets out of them and what he learns while doing that, is not only funny, but applicable to our own real life situations.

In the first of a series “Coming Home”, Hooch is rescued from a puppy mill (a place where dogs are kept, often in less than ideal conditions, for the sole purpose of raising puppies) and is brought to live with a man and woman who love him and provide a warm friendly place to live. Hooch quickly learns about sharing this new home with other Labrador Retrievers who are being trained to perform certain tasks and others who are busy with raising families of their own. The place that Hooch was brought to live is in the country and

near a large wooded area, that presents many problems and challenges to the inquisitive growing puppy.

It is my desire to communicate these life lessons that I learned long ago, to a generation seemingly trapped in the complexities of iPods, Mobile Phones, Video Games, television, and the like.

To the reader who is sharing these stories with a younger person, I don't expect the young reader to understand my intent, but only to enjoy a story and to loose themselves in the imagination of a place where interaction is simple, understandable and straightforward. Perhaps within these short stories, you, the adult reader, also will find a restful place in your imagination and help to communicate that to the person you are reading the story to. For that younger reader who is reading for themselves, try to remove yourself to the world of Hooch and walk with him through his adventures as he learns to be a good dog.

## **EARLY MEMORIES**

Everyone knows that when animals talk about each other, they don't say "Mr. Rabbit" or "Mrs. Frog", no, they don't talk that way. When animals talk they say "Brer Rabbit" or "Brer Frog". So when Hooch learned to talk from Polly, his mother, he had to learn to refer to the other animals respectfully, by using the proper title "Brer", that's just the way it is in the animal kingdom. His mother told him, that when the animals referred to humans, they never used the title "Brer", that was only used for animals, they must always use the term "Man" or "Woman", for it had been passed down by the old ones that the animals must hold humans in high respect. It seems that The One who created all, said that the animals must respect humans because He had made humans in His Image and therefore they were made higher than animals.

Hooch remembered many things that his mother told him, he also remembered how good he felt when he could snuggle up next to his mother and hear her heart beating, he could not remember ever seeing his father, but his mother said his name was Larry and he was a very handsome dog. Hooch remembered how he disliked it when his mother left the doghouse where he was born, how even though he huddled with his brothers and sisters he sometimes felt cold and alone.

As Hooch began to grow he noticed that all his brothers and sisters seemed to be bigger than he was and sometimes they would pick on him and hold him down. His mother told him they were just playing, but Hooch did not like it anyway, so

he would always try to stay away from them, but then he would feel lonesome.

There was a man that came by every day to bring food to his mother, sometimes the man would have someone else with him, the man would call all the puppies out of the doghouse and the people with the man would look at Hooch and all his brothers and sisters, whenever they would look at Hooch, the man would say, “Oh, that’s the runt of the litter, he stays by himself”, the others would nod their heads and not look at him anymore. As Hooch and his brothers and sisters got bigger, sometimes the other people that came with the man would pick up one of the pups, but they never seemed to pick up Hooch. His brothers and sisters seemed to like it when the people would pick them up, Hooch saw that their tails would wag and they would try to lick the face of the people that held them. He thought that looked like fun, especially when the people would play with the puppies, the puppies would jump and bark and run all around, and Hooch would join in the fun too, but nobody ever seemed to pick him up.

One day, the man who brought food to his mother, also brought a pan of food for the puppies. The man showed each puppy how to put his mouth in the food and then stood back and smiled as each puppy would lick off the food that was sticking to their nose. The man also put Hooch’s nose in the dish and as Hooch licked the food off his nose, he found that it tasted good. Of course, it did not taste as good as his mother’s milk, but Hooch put his nose back in the dish and licked up some of the food. All his brothers and sisters were also eating the food, and even crawling into the dish, soon they all had food all over themselves, and began to lick the food off each other. Hooch thought that was fun and it

seemed that his brothers and sisters even liked him, so he enjoyed the times that the man would bring the food.

Shortly after that, Hooch began to notice that when people would come to look at the litter of pups that he was part of, sometimes they would walk away with one of his brothers or sisters and then would not come back. Hooch asked his mother Polly about what was happening and she sadly explained that the people came and took the puppies away to another home, and she never saw them again. Polly was getting older and she told Hooch that she had seen this happen many time because she had many litters of puppies. She hoped that the pups were happy, but she never saw any of them again. Hooch wondered why no one ever looked at him and picked him up, after all he could run and play like all his brothers and sisters, and he was growing up too, even though he was smaller than they were. Polly explained that people usually stayed away from the runt of the litter because they thought there was something wrong with it. She told Hooch that in stories that were told by the old ones, many times they said the runt was the best dog in the litter and that people were making a mistake by not choosing them first. This made Hooch feel very important, and when people would come to look at the pups he would run out and jump and bark and run in circles. People would laugh at him and often would play with him a little bit, but in the end would choose one of his bothers or sisters.

Soon, Hooch was the only one left. Polly looked so sad and tired. Hooch tried to play with his mother because all his brothers and sisters were now gone, but she often would just lay and sleep. When she was awake she would tell Hooch that she was not feeling well and Hooch noticed she was looking

very old and worn out. To encourage Hooch, she would tell him that soon someone would come who would love him as much as she did and they would take him to a new home. Hooch would bark and say, “no Mother, I won’t leave you” and Polly would only smile and tell him that he really would not have a choice. She also said that the old ones told stories of a beautiful place where there was not small cold houses and hard concrete, but beautiful trees and grass, toys to play with and fresh air. Hooch did not know what these things were, and Polly could only tell him about what she knew from the stories she heard, but the stories were exciting to Hooch and he took comfort from his mother telling them to him.

## **The Trip Home**

One day it was very cold and raining. Polly stood in the door of her small house and Hooch noticed she looked very tired and was coughing a lot. Hooch huddled in the corner and he felt the cold wind blowing on him. He wished his mother would come and lay down with him, but she only stood there, staring at the fence, so Hooch curled up in a tight ball and tried to stay warm. Suddenly the sound of voices came from over the fence. The man told a person who was with him that he had a white pup, the last one in the litter, and he would get him. The man climbed over the fence and picked up Hooch and handed him to a pretty woman with a soft voice and she held Hooch. Hooch thought that was wonderful, he could feel her arms around him and she was soft and warm and smelled good too! The man continued down a row of doghouses, pointing out puppies from different litters. Another man who

was with the woman pointed out different pups to the woman. Pups who were bigger and stronger, but the woman quietly said, no..... I want this one! The woman walked away, holding Hooch close to her and Hooch looked back at his mother standing behind the wire in the pen, she looked so old and tired and as he watched she slowly walked into her house, Hooch never saw his mother again.

As the woman walked past many pens and doghouses, with Hooch in her arms, Hooch could see many dogs who were barking and looking at him. He heard some saying that Hooch was very lucky to be leaving that place, he stared at them and they looked back at him, many saying good bye and good luck. He was especially drawn to a large handsome male dog in the end pen, Hooch could not take his eyes off him, he was so big and strong. The male dog looked at Hooch and said “good bye, Hooch” nodding his head as Hooch was carried by. Hooch wondered how the big dog knew his name, but then he was carried around a corner and he looked out on a world he had never seen before.



The woman walked up to a car, of course Hooch didn't know what it was, but a door opened and she sat down inside with Hooch in her lap. The door closed and it was warm and the wind was not blowing. The woman petted Hooch and scratched his ears, that really felt good! She held him tight and talked softly to him about a new home and new friends he would meet. The other man then got in the car, there was a noise, and the car started to move. Hooch was afraid, he had never seen anything like this before, but the woman held him and said everything was alright and that they were going home and Hooch felt very warmed and protected and was fascinated by the trees and buildings he could see out the car window.... and he fell asleep.

Every so often, Hooch would wake up and the woman was still holding him and petting him. He could hear her heart beat, just like he had listened to his mother's heart beat when he was a small puppy, and it brought him much comfort, soon, he would drift off to sleep again. After what seemed

like a very long time, the car stopped and the woman said “Hooch, we are home”. How did she know that his name was Hooch? He thought that was very strange! Hooch looked out the window and there were tall trees and green grass and mountains and a barn and a log house and flowers and chickens and everything, just like his mother said. The woman put Hooch down on the ground and said “Come Hooch, lets go in the house”. Hooch started to run down the path, there were no fences and he could see a long way and it smelled good. Hooch was very happy.



The woman walked across a wide porch and Hooch tried to stay very close to her. She opened a door and a rush of warm air hit Hooch in the face and he smelled some wonderful smells. Hooch realized that he was getting very hungry as he walked into the house. So much to see and to smell, Hooch ran all around looking at new things and smelling new smells, he did not know what the smells were but they really were good.

## **The First Day**

So much to see! So much to smell! Hooch just ran all around inside the house. There was a large wood stove standing by one wall, of course Hooch did not know what it was, but the closer he got to it, the warmer it was. The

wood stove was cracking and popping and bright lights danced in the door glass. Hooch slowly walked up to the wood stove, his nose stretched out smelling and listening to this strange thing. All at once the woman spoke sharply and said “Hooch, no” and scooped him up in her arms. She held him close to the stove and told Hooch it was hot and that it would bite him if he got too close. Hooch knew what that meant and something in the tone of her voice spoke a warning to him, so he just looked up at her and even though he enjoyed being held, he wiggled to get down, there was just too much to smell and see.

Once he got on the floor, he was so happy he just jumped straight up in the air, and came down running. Hooch was running around the end of a leather couch and noticing that it smelled very good when all at once he came face to face with Lily, the cat. He never saw such a fearsome sight! The cat’s back was arched up and it made her look two times taller than she was, her mouth was open and she was making a hissing sound. Hooch tried to stop but he was running too fast and his feet slipped in the floor, he couldn’t help it but he slid right into Lily, who promptly swatted him with a front paw, right on the nose!



“Ouch”, yelped Hooch! “Why did you do that?” Lily said “this is my house, and you were running at me, who are you anyway, and what are you doing here? Hooch said “my name is Hooch, I am a white Labrador Retriever and the woman brought me here”. “Oh no”, said Lily “she is always bringing some stray animal home.... A white Labrador, who ever heard of such a thing”? “I have seen black Labradors and yellow Labradors and chocolate Labradors, but I have never seen a white Labrador”! Just then, the woman, hearing Hooch yelp and the cat hiss came out of the kitchen to see what was going on. She reached down and picked up Hooch, “I see you two have met each other” she said “and looks like you got the worst of it Hooch” as she wiped the scratch on his nose. The woman scolded Lily, “you should know better”, she said, “you get out of here”. Lily recognized the tone in her voice and quickly ran upstairs under a bed. Hooch looked at the woman as she wiped his nose, “I’m sorry Hooch”, she said

“that mean old cat just does not have any patience with anything, lets go get something to eat”. The woman carried Hooch into the kitchen where he noticed there were some really good smells. The woman picked a dish off the counter and sat it and Hooch down on the floor. Hooch had been so busy he had not noticed how hungry he was and the food in the dish really smelled good, he was really hungry and it wasn't long before he had eaten all the food. The woman picked him up and sat down in a chair by the fire and held him and petted him and Hooch enjoyed that very much, in fact he began to realize how tired he was and his eyes began to close. The woman laughed and got a laundry basket from the other room, placing one of her old coats in the basket she laid Hooch on top of the coat and put the basket in front of the woodstove. Hooch thought about his mother Polly and what she had said and he remembered how comfortable and warm he was laying beside her, but he was not sad, he was very happy but just could not keep his eyes open and quickly fell fast asleep.



He awakened to the sound of the man and the woman talking. The man said that they should not let Hooch get used to the house and that he belonged in the kennel with all the other dogs. The woman argued that he was so small, and she wanted to keep him in the house. Just then Hooch jumped out of the basket and it fell over on him, the man and woman laughed as Hooch yelped and ran from the basket. Hooch quickly realized it was nothing to be afraid of and wagging his tail walked over to the man and woman. They petted him and scratched his ears and Hooch playfully ran around them but suddenly stopped and piddled on the floor. “No”, the woman said, and quickly reached down, picked him up and took him outside. The man said, “see, are you really ready to have a puppy in your house and train it to go potty outside”? The woman said “I

guess you're right, we can put him in with Amber's litter, they are not that much older than him". Meanwhile, Hooch was having a wonderful time running and playing in the grass. He had never done that before, it smelled so good and was soft so it did not hurt when he fell down, and there were sticks and pine cones to chew on and so many different things to smell.... He really liked the grass.



The woman walked over and picked Hooch up, he tried to lick her face and snuggled up next to her. The woman carried Hooch and the man walked beside them to a building with a pretty green roof. Hooch could hear other dogs and puppies playing, as they got closer to the kennel building, the man told Hooch this was his new home and when they opened the door Hooch was very surprised. Inside it was warm and dry and he could smell other dogs. The woman carried Hooch to a large pen and bent down to show him a large litter of chocolate brown puppies, they were all looking at him through the fence. Hooch reached out his nose to smell them and they in turn poked their noses through the fence to smell him. They seemed very friendly and were all whining and jumping and very excited to see him. The man said, "they are bigger than him, but not by much, I think it will be OK"! The man opened the gate of the pen and the woman carried Hooch inside, then stooped down so all the puppies could smell Hooch, they were all very excited and all wanted to play with him, but Hooch was a little afraid. There were so many of them

(actually thirteen in all) and he was smaller and he was white, and they were all brown. The woman sensed that Hooch was afraid so she did not put him down yet, but stood up and said, “come on Hooch, I’ll introduce you to the other dogs”. Leaving the pen, she held him tightly and walked over to large wooden box. Hooch could hear something inside the box, but did not know what it was. The woman opened the top of the box and the biggest black Labrador that Hooch had ever seen stood up and stared at Hooch. The woman said, “Hooch, this is Doc”! Doc reached out and smelled Hooch and then licked him with the biggest lick he had ever felt. “Hi Hooch”, Doc said, welcome to the kennel” Hooch looked at him he was so big and black and shiny and he had a great big tongue and his eyes smiled when he looked at you. Hooch immediately liked him, but didn’t say anything. The woman walked over to another pen, still carrying Hooch and they looked in. There were ten small black puppies sleeping under a heat lamp, they were very small, only a few weeks old the woman said, and they seemed very happy. At one end of the pen was another box and the woman opened the top as she had opened Doc’s box. What Hooch saw made him gasp. A beautiful yellow Labrador stood up and looked at Hooch, and she looked just like Polly, Hooch’s mother. The woman said, “Hooch, this is Maggie”. Maggie looked at Hooch and quietly said “hello Hooch”. Hooch wiggled and wiggled and tried to get into the pen with Maggie, but the woman said, “no Hooch, Maggie is taking care of her pups now and you can’t get in there.