

This Dog's Life

By John Byorth



CREDIT: CHRIS THOMPSON/CTFOTO.COM

Angus the Dog

[Ed's Note: For five years from 2001–2006, I was lucky enough to work at now-departed Hooked on the Outdoors magazine here in Boulder. I learned what goes into an outdoor sports magazine from editor-in-chief Nancy Coulter-Parker and editor-at-large John Byorth. So I thought I'd give John a chance to say goodbye to the most important member of our staff there—our editorial dog Angus. —Doug Schnitzspahn]

Angus was born on October 31, 1994, in Dillon, Montana, to Sage, my brother Pat's springer spaniel, and an unknown father. Pat, his wife Susan and I think, however, that his sire may have been the black lab that lived down the alley at the Sinclair gas station.

Angus wasn't just my dog, he was more my partner. Chicks dug him, dudes wanted to be him

I had the opportunity to bring Angus on a good number of adventures. We backcountry skied dozens of times—Angus poached first tracks off Scotch Bonnet, Henderson Ridge, Miller's Ridge, The Ridge, Daisy Pass, Mt. Republic, The Burn, Bear Canyon, Goose Creek, Rock Creek, Beartooth Pass, The Headwall, Bradley Meadows and Slushman's, to mention a few. By poaching, I mean that when we skinned to the top of these mountains, we would take about a half-hour to change out of our wet climbing gear and into dry clothing, drink some tea, eat some snacks, and then gear up. We'd dig a pit to check on snow conditions, and if safe, we would offer up—a generous offer, mind you—the first tracks down the mountain to someone—maybe it was a birthday gift or a payback or maybe you were just being a gentleman. Angus would wait 'til the lucky first tracker would so much as twitch toward downhill and then launch into the powder—off cornices, down chutes, disappearing into deep snow and taking (a.k.a. "snaking") your line.

He was a porpoiser with purpose, moving down through the powder like a dolphin down a wave. This dog could ski with the best of ski dogs. He knew how to ride on a snowmobile, leaning with the turns. And he was perfectly fine in the cold, though I recall waking one cold, cold morning in Cooke City to find Angus shivering and covered in frost. I pulled him into my bag and it is the only time in my memory he licked my face.

On one summer ski down Rock Creek Headwall on Beartooth Pass, I took a cornice a little fast and flew quite a ways before landing in some mushy corn, causing a wet slide. The avalanche took me down the mountain and raked me over the coals, as they say – into the talus. When I finally came to rest, I looked upside down back up the mountain to see Angus on top of the cornice. He bellowed, as was his vocal way, "Rohr-rohr-rohr-roo—ooh—oohh," and lept off a dozen-foot ledge onto a forty-degree pitch. He came up to me smiling the way he crinkled his nose all up, sneezing and wagging his entire body. "Yeah man, I know, that was a sweet landing. You'll have to show me how you did it next time."

And now, in his last hours as I write this eulogy, waiting for him to pass, I realize all the great adventures we had together. I honestly can't believe how many I've come to remember today and I am simply amazed either one of us walked out alive. At 14 and one week shy of six months, the fetch monster is finally subdued.

I can only thank him for teaching me patience, unconditional love, loyalty and companionship. Long live Angus. •

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contributors

What is the one piece of gear you can't live without?

dougschnitzspahn



Sadly, my iPhone. If nothing else for the freedom of being able to click a quick photo and check in on work when I'm sitting on a lift. Is that freedom?

jaymeotto



Cran-Razz Clif Shot Blocks—they don't melt or freeze. You can even put them through the wash and dry cycle while in your jacket pocket and they still come out edible. Shrunken, but edible.

adamchase



Craft Gore WS Gunde Boxers for running, skate skiing or any activity in which to go without would result in some very painful defrosting. Very painful, indeed.

radhamarcum



Superfine merino wool underlayers. I'm an icicle without them.

rachelwalker



Prescription sunglasses. Whether I'm camping in the desert or on a glacier, prescription sunglasses make my entire trip significantly easier because they let me go without my contact lenses.

jeddferris



Newton Running shoes. Just burned through my second pair. They helped fix my horrible form.

peterkray



A Gore Wind Stopper vest that I picked up at a trade show in Munich eight years ago.

nicko'connell



My Cloudveil Rayzar soft shell pants are the most comfortable and versatile ski pant I've ever used.

We Want to Know: Tell us what piece of gear can't you live without at ElevationOutdoors.com