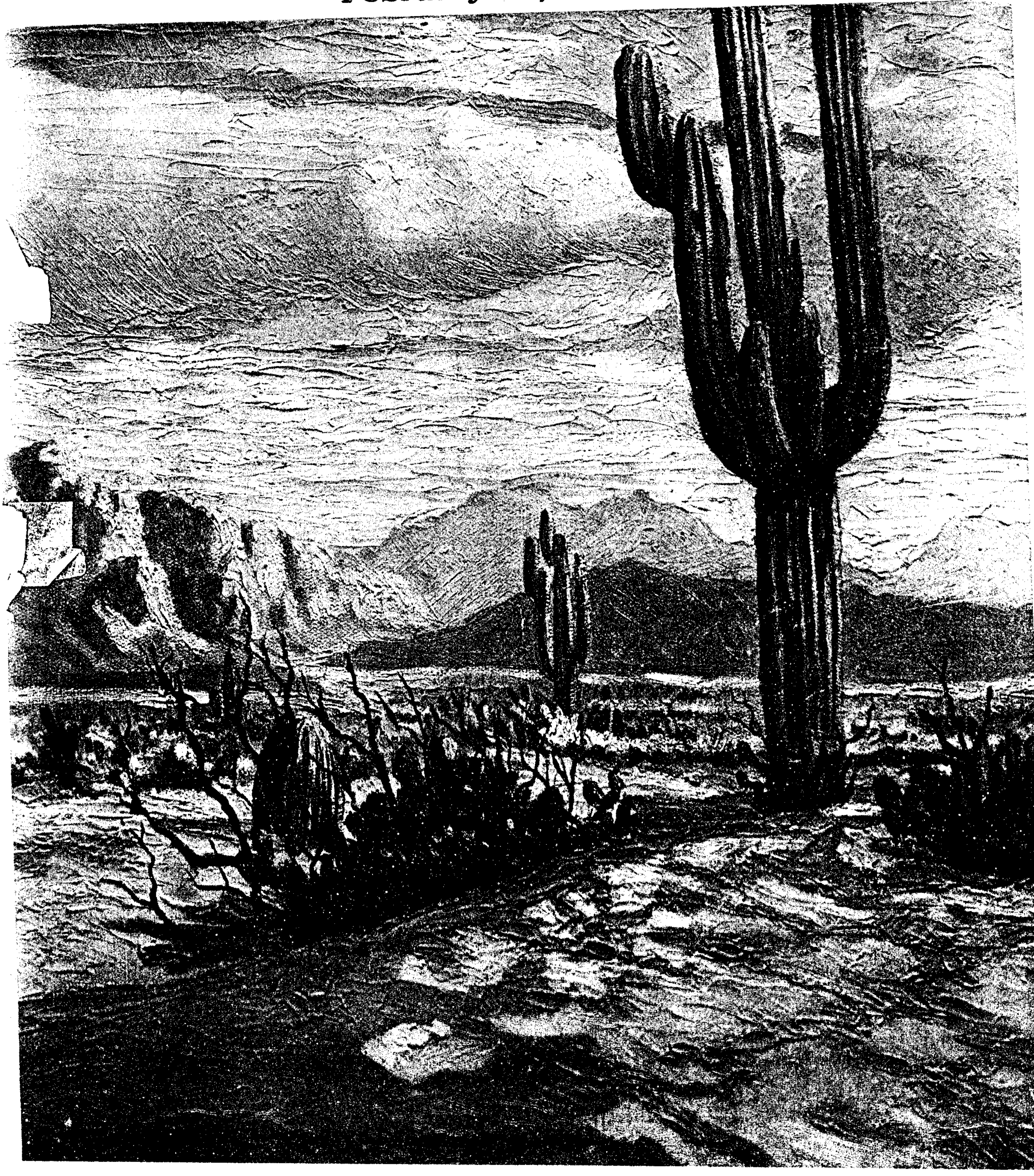
The Literary Digest

(Title Registered in U. S. Patent Office)

Price 10 Cent[illegible]

[illegible]00, No. 7
[illegible] No. 2026

February 16, 1929



AND SO CHINOOK FOUND THE END OF THE TRAIL

ON HIS TWELFTH BIRTHDAY, after seeing a younger dog broken in for the leadership of his master's team of mushers, old Chinook slipt away from the side of the man he worshiped, and presently vanished into the white continent which stretches from Commander Byrd's base on the Bay of Whales. A lost dog! Would he find his way back to camp? Would his sturdy brown form be sighted clambering over some dazzling hummock? A lost dog! Once it was he, Chinook, who always went in search of a wanderer, and brought it in; but now others nosed around in vain for him. Had the grand old fellow lost his footing and fallen into some hopeless crevasse? Or—and this surmise, we gather, added a rankling barb to the anxious loneliness of Arthur T. Walden, Chinook's master and inseparable chum—was there a subtle purpose behind the patriarchal musher's exit from the scene, a tragic instinct, a fatal emotion, almost a thought? According to an editorial in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, under the head-line, "Byrd's First Tragedy":

P. & A. photograph

"JUST LIKE A PERSON"

That was a frequent comment of strangers who witnessed Chinook's behavior with his master, Arthur T. Walden, as in this picture.

Walden knows what happened; every one in the party who ever handled "huskies" knows. Chinook in the great intelligence that characterizes the husky breed realized that he "was done"—that Walden was breaking in a new lead dog, and that as much as the men loved him, that when the real work of the expedition began he would have to be an idle onlooker. He was too great a trail-breaker, too, not to have thought that feeding an idle hand on an expedition of that sort was costly business.

He must have thought lots of canine thoughts, for he went out alone in the snow and laid down and died.

There are breeds of worker dogs who have done much to aid man in his fight for progress, and in his efforts to break down the barriers of far places, and of this class was Chinook, who died in the Bay of Whales ice-fields, far from the high north and muskeag land.

Maybe a vagrant Chinook wind—warm wind of the north for which he was named—will blow its way south in the springtime to whisper a requiem over him for those who knew his worth.

A lost dog—"yes, but such a dog!" exclaims John T. Brady in the Boston Sunday *Post*, in the course of an "intimate story" of "The Heart of Chinook, Greatest of Sled Dogs, Who Died with His Boots On." He tells of a conversation he had with Walden and Chinook at the former's Wonalancet (N. H.) home last September, just before the man and the dog left to join the Byrd expedition. As we read:

"This is going to be our greatest adventure together, isn't it, old man?" he said to Chinook, while the dog sat with his muzzle laid on his master's knee, and his intelligent eyes fixt on Walden's face. Then, as Chinook "woofed" agreement, Walden turned to me and went on:

"And it may be the last adventure in life for one, or both of us. But we'll take it together, and meet whatever fate may befall us with our boots on. I have often thought with dread of the possibility that there will come a day when it will be my painful duty to take a last walk with Chinook into the depths of the woods and mercifully end his suffering from illness or old age in the quickest possible way.

"So it is my most earnest wish that he may die as I know he wants to die, in harness, as he has worked for me all his life."

News from the Byrd expedition that Chinook had wandered away into the Antarctic ice-fields, presumably to his death, interested dog-lovers everywhere throughout this land and even in other countries, for his name and fame were known from pole to pole.

But here in New England, where he was regarded as an institution, thousands of people were really shocked by the account of his sudden and strange death, which gave them a feeling of personal loss—tho he was only a dog!

Not a blue-blooded, pretty, pampered, temperamental, snobbish, posing, thoroughbred show-dog, to be sure. But a red-blooded, unspoiled, stout-hearted, modest, gallant, dignified, useful, lovable, he-man's dog, and a blue-ribbon champion too, as a racing sled-dog.

My first acquaintance with Chinook began when he won the first International Sled Dog Derby at Berlin, New Hampshire, in 1922, and having known him personally ever since, and seen many manifestations of his extraordinary intelligence, this story of him going off on his twelfth birthday, into the white wilderness to die, strikes me as being a very odd thing for him to do to say the least.

The writer of the story suggests the possibility that Chinook realized he could no longer keep pace with the younger dogs and do his share of the work, and so deliberately wandered away, preferring to die rather than become a burden to his master.

But Chinook knew his master would never regard him as a burden under any circumstances, and he realized that when Walden put some dog in as leader of his freight team, it was to save him for emergencies, when his weight and power were needed to hold a loaded sledge from sliding down a dangerous slope or to yank it out of a crevasse.

Long ago, as a matter of fact, Chinook got over being jealous of usurpers of his time-honored position at the head of his master's racing team. He knew that he was enthroned in his master's heart, and no pretender could take that place away from him.

This was strikingly illustrated, Mr. Brady points out, by an incident that happened during the sled-dog race at Poland Springs three years ago, when Walden used Chinook's ill-fated son, Kaltag, as his lead dog in the race, "but the old dog never

showed the least sign of resentment or jealousy." On the contrary:

One night when Kaltag had become tangled in his chain and was strangling to death, Chinook, on hearing his son's cries for help, woke up Walden from a sound sleep by pulling him out of bed, with the result that Kaltag's life was saved.

So, it is my firm belief that in going off into the Antarctic ice-fields he had some other purpose in mind than seeking death. I rather think he must have sensed some impending danger; that he went away to find out where it lay in order to be able to warn his master against it, and that he met with a fatal accident.

P. & A. photograph

WHEN CHINOOK'S TEAM WON THE CUP

Here we see the prize trophy of the New England Sled-Dog Derby being presented to Walden, who is accompanied by his great leader—and Chinook got his full share of the applause.

No doubt his disappearance was a hard blow to Walden, and I can visualize the veteran musher, hardened as he is by a rough life, lying awake in his tent at night, smoking cigaret after cigaret, with a mist in his eyes and ears eagerly cocked to catch a familiar wolfish howl, and rushing out in the morning to scan the horizon in the hope of catching a glimpse of his missing pet.

And during his working day, for he has a flare for masculine poetry, I can readily imagine him on the trail, repeating what Pat O'Cotter, the Roughneck Poet, wrote about the old Alaskan "sourdough" who wondered if dogs would be allowed in Heaven.

You can't tell me God would have Heaven
So a man couldn't mix with his friends;
That we're doomed to meet disappointment
When we come to the place the Trail ends.

That would be a low-grade sort of Heaven,
And I'd never regret a damned sin
If I mush to the gates white and pearly,
And they don't let my husky in.

For I know it would never seem homelike,
No matter how golden the strand,
If I lost out that pal-loving feeling

Walden and Chinook were inseparable pals, and on the rare occasions when they were apart for any length of time, the dog was miserable and the man was plainly not himself. Walden was inclined to get impetuous and "fly off the handle" when he was crossed or things went wrong with him.

But Chinook seemed to have the uncanny faculty of sensing his master's every mood, and the dog's calm, imperturbable, self-controlled manner had a soothing influence upon Walden on such occasions.

"Whenever I am disturbed over anything, Chinook instinctively recognizes it immediately," Walden once told me. And often when I have let my anger over something of no great importance get the best of me, he has actually made me feel ashamed."

There was one occasion, however, when Chinook showed that he felt his master was fully justified in giving vent to an outburst of anger—in fact, the dog got angry, too, that day.

Walden was driving a team of Chinook's sons and daughters behind their sire in an international sled-dog derby at Quebec, and on the trail one of the pups took it into his head to start a mutiny, in which every dog on the team soon joined except the leader. First the mutineers lay down on the job, then they started a fight among themselves. The result was a tangle of harness and snarling dogs, and Walden leapt into the midst of it.

Meanwhile, Chinook had turned round in his tracks and after surveying his progeny for a moment with a look of disgust, he, too, waded into the melee, not to fight, but to help his master straighten out the team by yanking the fighters apart and tossing them to where they belonged on either side of the tow-rope.

Thus the mutiny was quelled, but valuable time had been lost, and the best that Chinook could do in that race, his last appearance in an international derby, was to pull his young and inexperienced puppies into sixth place.

Chinook had a strain of wild wolf blood in his veins, inherited from his mother, Ningo, the daughter of one of the dogs that Peary picked to drag him over the last stage of his journey to the North Pole, relates Mr. Brady, continuing:

Occasionally, during his early years, he showed evidence of it by killing chickens, sheep, and calves. Once when Walden caught

P. & A. photograph

A DISCRIMINATING RADIO FAN

Chinook was not crazy about "getting" distant stations, but he thoroughly enjoyed old-fashioned melodies, didn't object to a little high-class jazz for a change, and preferred barytone voices to tenors.

him in the act of killing a calf and undertook to drive out his savage instincts with a whip, Chinook even attacked his master.

"It was not my intention to beat Chinook cruelly," Walden told me in describing that incident. "I thought too much of him to do that, and would have cut my right hand off sooner than break his spirit by a terrific beating.

"But when he lunged at me with a vicious growl, I knew that it was the blood of his savage sires that was actuating him, and I had to fight for my life.

"He fought me like a demon dog, and when, at last, he quit his struggling and I let go my hold on his lower jaw, he looked up at me with head and tail erect, conquered, but uncowed."

From that day on Chinook was always a model dog in every respect, and on numerous occasions he publicly demonstrated that he was literally one of nature's noblemen, with not an ounce of bad disposition in all his hundred pounds.

With children he was especially gentle, and would let them pull his tail and maul him without a growl. Because of his heroic size, parents feared to let their children go near him, before this admirable trait became publicly known, as a result of an incident that happened at the Old Home Day celebration at Tamworth, New Hampshire, one summer.

Walden had tried in vain to convince the crowd that Chinook was really very gentle, but a little girl turned the trick.

A pretty tot, with golden curls, she escaped from her mother's watchful eye, ran over to Chinook, and while everybody on the field, except herself and Mr. Walden, held their breath in fear, she put her arms around the dog's neck and hugged him.

And, with gallantry worthy of a knight of old, Chinook turned his head and kissed one of the little lady's chubby hands.

Then she fed him an ice-cream cone, and afterward Chinook followed her about all afternoon as tho she had been committed to his charge, keeping his distance, yet ever watchful that no harm should befall her.

Thus did Chinook become an idol in the eyes of many who had at first treated him as an unwelcome guest, a dog to be feared and shunned.

Later he scored another triumph of a similar character, when a Boston woman with a great horror of dogs came to Wonalancet Farm for her vacation.

At first sight of Chinook she went into hysterics, but before a week had passed the big dog had won her confidence, and done more for her threadbare nerves than doctors and medicine had been able to do.

Great, powerful fellow that he was, there was nothing of the bully about Chinook, and while he always insisted on his own rights, he respected those of others weaker than himself.

When a Pomeranian came to Wonalancet Farm one summer, Chinook immediately showed the big-brother spirit toward the little fellow, and once saved the "pom" from being hooked and killed by an ugly cow. They had a glorious time together that summer, and when the little dog departed, Chinook was visibly deprest.

On a visit to Walden's place last summer, I saw a striking exhibition of Chinook's gallantry and love of children.

There is a stream between Walden's house and his dog kennels, and in walking over a rustic bridge that crosses it, a little girl accidentally dropt her doll and it rolled into the water.

Of course, she immediately began to cry, and Chinook rushed to her side to see what was the matter. She pointed to the doll, which was floating down-stream, and Chinook promptly jumped into the stream, rescued it from a watery grave, and deposited it at her feet.

After Walden announced his intention of taking Chinook along on the Byrd expedition, Mr. Brady tells us, he received thousands of letters urging him not to do so and saying it would be cruelty to dumb animals to take such an old dog on such a hard trip. However, as we read on:

These critics did not understand how much the companionship of Chinook meant to Walden. He had many good reasons for taking Chinook with him, and they were not all sentimental ones. He felt that the dog might go crazy or die of a broken heart from loneliness if he was left at home, and tho he knew that he couldn't expect Chinook to do as much sled work as a dog in his prime, he figured that if he got into a bad situation he could depend on his faithful old leader to get him out of it or die in the attempt.

Moreover, Chinook was in good physical condition despite his years, and Walden thought that even tho the dog didn't do any work he would be an inspiration to the other dogs.

Chinook was a one-man dog in every respect, and this was plainly evidenced by his attitude toward people who tried to curry his favor by fondling him. He would let anybody pat or stroke him for a few moments, and then he would move majestically away, as much as to say: "That's enough." And he couldn't be coaxed to come back for more petting.

A fitting requiem for Walden to sing for him are these lines from "A Faithful Dog," by Richard Burton:

My merry-hearted comrade on a day,
Gave over all his mirth, and went away
Upon the darksome journey I must face
Some time as well. Each hour I miss his grace.
His meek obedience and his constancy,
Never again will he look up at me
With loyal eyes, nor leap for my caress
As one who wished not to be master-less:
And never shall I hear his pleading bark
Outside the door, when all the ways grow dark,
Bidding the housefolk gather close inside.
It seems a cruel thing, since he has died,
To make his memory small, or deem it sin
To reckon such a mate as less than kin.

The news of Chinook's disappearance came out of the Antarctic in the form of a wireless from Russell Owen, the New York *Times* correspondent with the Byrd expedition, and we learn that Commander Byrd himself had directed that Chinook was to be spared unnecessary labor. Of his end, the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* exclaims:

A fine old Roman exit. He sleeps well, the corporeal Chinook, in his frozen bed. But in the Valhalla of dogs the spirit of Chinook is recounting his wonders to the two who were chosen officially to welcome him. Who those two are we have no manner of doubt. They are "Bob, the Son of Battle," and "The Kid," immortalized by Richard Harding Davis in the best of all his stories, "The Bar Sinister."

Further eloquent testimony of Chinook's greatness might be found, if needed, in the fact that the genealogists of dogdom are already disputing over recondite points of his pedigree. In a letter to *The Times*, Mr. John Stuart Thompson writes:

The Times states that Byrd's lead dog Chinook is said to be a grandson of the lead dog used by Peary. Peary used many sled-dogs of various breeds. Chinook is a great dog, but is not descended from Peary's lead dog on the great polar occasion. I own the descendant of that dog, the famous Pamelus, descended from Peary's Polaris. Sappala used a similar lead dog, Fox, on the Nome exploit. Balto was not the leader. I know all these dogs and men.

Chinook is a cross between an Eskimo dog and a mastiff. Balto was a cross between an Eskimo, police and Newfoundland. An Eskimo dog with an admixture of wolf blood is called a husky, a rangy but savage dog. None of these dogs are beautiful.

Now come the gorgeous white dogs Polaris, Pamelus, etc. In Bayne's book, "Polaris," it will be noted that they are all white Samoyede-Eskimos, getting weight from the latter and supreme dog beauty from the former.

In other words, they are the Russian sled-dogs of the explorers Nansen, Amundsen, Abruzzi, and others, from whom Peary got them—the kind of sled-dogs the vikings brought ages ago to Greenland: small tight ears, double-plumed tail carried over the back; intelligent enough almost to understand language; loving, and obedient even to death; huge mane, lambent eyes like a doe's.

Tho lighter than Eskimos, I'll match them, with their spirit and brains, against any Northern dog in sled work. I had a letter from Queen Marie of Roumania in which she said that "two of them are the Princess Ileana's inseparable friends, with whom she is often photographed." When I sent a picture of Pamelus to Noah Webster's granddaughter, Mrs. Skeel, at Rome, she described the dog "as imperial as gorgeous Rome and as gorgeous as imperial Rome."

The Times a year ago had a picture of Mayor Walker petting Sappala's lead dog Fox—a white Samoyede-Eskimo. The Samoyede is a Russian tribe that a thousand years ago moved into Siberia. The so-called Siberian dogs that Mrs. Riker and Sappala now drive in dog derbies are East Siberia dogs, short-legged and short-haired, like a short-legged police dog, or hound.

Byrd's and Walden's justified devotion to Chinook was no greater than the European polar explorers' devotion to their great and supremely beautiful Samoyede sled-dogs.

"Chinook was only a dog," comments the Toledo *Blade*, "but dogs more and more are finding a place in literature, and by the same token a warmer place in human hearts." And the editorial speculates:

What was in Chinook's heart when he walked away? He may have felt approaching death. Dogs desire to die alone. What more fit place than this white world where, his own breath gone,