



He features on my iPhone's wallpaper



I never wanted to get a dog, I really didn't. I fought tooth and nail against the idea and came up with what I thought were some very strong arguments against it.

Once, when we had a few people over one Sunday afternoon (not something I encourage), a friend asked why I was against procuring a pooch.

"Because it will eventually die," I replied. That seemed to stem the flow of conversation, momentarily. "Something else to love and lose," I added.

"You are a card," my friend said, and I was waiting for her to add: "You should be dealt with."

But I was serious. I was reminded of that episode when I finally succumbed and went to see the film *Red Dog* recently.

I won't spoil it in case you are one of the three or four sad individuals who hasn't seen it yet, but just let me say that *Red Dog*, like all of us, was not immortal. As we left the cinema, teary-eyed, my son Hamish said: "Right, let's go home and see white dog!" (White dog with caramel patches, actually.)

Yes, I did eventually get a dog, a Maltese Shih Tzu called Sarge who is now 18 months old.

A testament to his family status is that there are now more photographs of him than Hamish in the family album and he features on my iPhone's wallpaper.

The fact remains, however, that I never actually agreed to get a dog. It was decided independently by my wife and son who conspired behind my back. One summer's day when I was stricken with a migraine, they saw their chance and went out and bought a puppy.



## Puppy love

One man and how he went to the dogs

Initially, he was to be called Henry but the breeder, a former British soldier and Falklands War veteran, dubbed him Sarge (son of General). The name seemed to fit, so we kept it.

I was ropeable at first, and spent the first few weeks fuming about this furry little bundle of inconvenience. I was, however, slowly becoming attached to the pup.

That became obvious when Sarge choked on a chicken neck and had to be rushed to the 24-hour veterinary clinic at Stafford Heights. I paced in the waiting room like an expectant father and was

awfully relieved when – several hundred dollars later – he was given the all clear.

I've had dogs before. My family had a dynasty of terriers called Tiny (three in all during several decades) and I probably shouldn't have denied my boy the joy of dog ownership for as long as I did.

Never mind, we've got a dog now, or should I say the dog's got us. Yes that was me you saw the other day, dutifully walking behind Sarge with a plastic bag, waiting for him to answer the call of nature.

I have to ask myself: "Has it come to this?" I guess it has.

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# Now and Then.



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