

# DOWN HOME: A little dog & the door locker

March 3, 2012

Topanga, the world's greatest dog, sometimes reminds me of Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*. Nope, Topanga can't sing a note. And she'd look doggone silly in a nun's habit. But she's not shy about emphasizing—actually, begging for—a few of her favorite things.

Here are Topanga's favorite things:

- *Taking long walks in our neighborhood. I'm not sure whether she likes the walking part, or she just enjoys the sniffing—fire hydrants, light poles, mailboxes—part.*
- *Eating treats after dinner. She loves treats so much, she learned my hand signal for "sit." She's not so great at understanding English, but she's terrific at sign language. And eating treats.*
- *Lying on her back while I scratch her belly, and sitting on my lap while I scratch her ears.*
- *Playing fetch, especially with the stuffed monkey I gave her for Christmas.*
- *Running and hopping around the bed and sticking her nose on Joanna's face before Jo gets up in the morning.*
- *Chasing squirrels. This proves she's the most optimistic canine in all creation. She'll teach herself to climb trees long before she scampers fast enough to catch a squirrel.*
- *Running errands with me on Saturday mornings. Really, running*

*errands is only an excuse for doing her very favorite thing. That would be riding in the car with her head out the window, face into the wind.*

When it's too cold or hot to roll the window down, Topanga stands with her front left paw on the door armrest, her rear paws and right paw on my left leg and her nose against the window. She knows I know she wants me to roll down the window, but I'm not going to do it when the air conditioner or heater is blasting.

To keep Topanga stabilized and—theoretically—to prevent her from flying out the window, I crook my left arm under her belly and then grip the steering wheel. Even then, Topanga occasionally loses her balance and shuffles her paws. Sometimes, she presses a button and rolls down the back window on the passenger side.

But a few weeks ago, she must've pounced on the door-lock button. Later, the doors automatically locked every time the car reached second gear. Problem is, I didn't want the doors to lock automatically. Worse, I didn't know how to undo what Topanga did. So, I drove around with locked doors because I was too lazy to pull out the owner's manual and de-code the locking system.

But on a trip to the cleaner's, she stutter-stepped again. Now, the lock is back to normal.

This reminds me how we sometimes get our lives out of sorts and don't really know what happened. If we'd take the time to search the Scriptures, pray, consult Christian friends and discipline ourselves, we could re-set our lives. But we're too lazy, selfish or, maybe, afraid. And Topanga isn't around to trip the button back again.