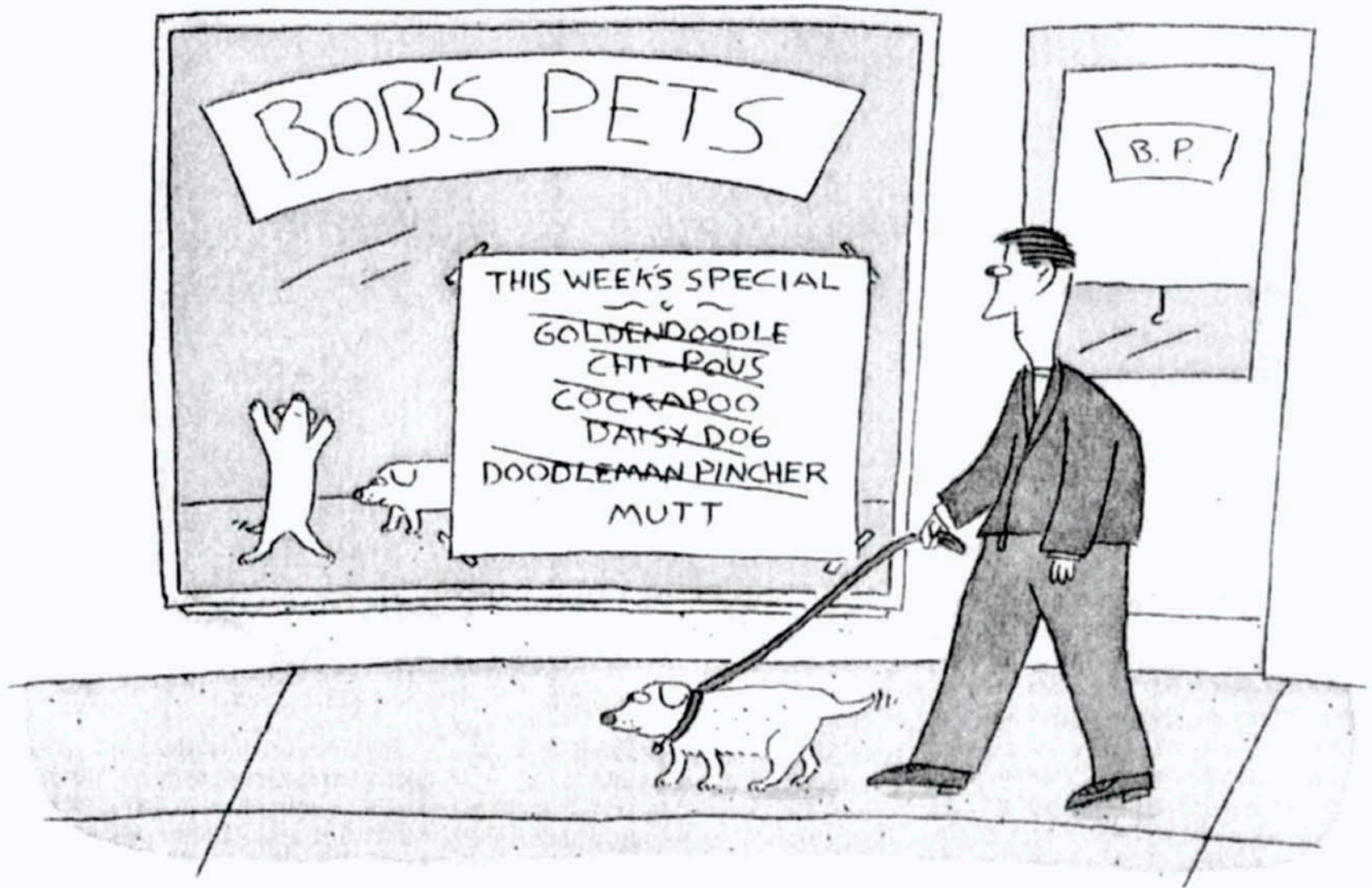


## O U T O F O R D E R



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## Our Goldendoodle, a Breed Apart

By ROGER MUMMERT

**A**ROUND the time that my wife and I gave in to our daughters' nagging and consented to consider getting a dog, we bumped into a friend whose dogs had just had puppies.

"The father is a purebred golden retriever," our friend said. Our girls' ears perked up with excitement. A golden was just what they'd hoped for.

"And the mother is a purebred poodle!"

My wrinkled brow notwithstanding, we agreed to have a look at the puppies. Our visit was memorable in two senses: the adorable sight of nine furry puppies suckling from one beleaguered mother, and the appalling smell of those same nine puppies pooping all over a holding pen set up in a small laundry room. Nonetheless, our brief visit sealed the deal. We parted with stars in our eyes and a commitment to take one of the pups when she was ready to be weaned.

In the four years since that fateful day, our dog has grown into a well-loved member of the family. The intelligence of the poodle and the gentle affectionateness of the golden make a perfect match. However, another development along the way soured the experience of strutting around town with our funny, furry doggie: on trend-happy Long Island, where yesterday's Kate Spade bag takes a back seat to today's Von Dutch trucker's hat, a dog has to carry a marquee breed name.

For a long time we struggled to find a name for this mix. Outside the supermarket and on the soccer field sidelines, our furry dog, with her rasta-like curls, drew oohs and ahs as well as an inevitable, "What kind of dog is this?"

"Well, her father is a golden."

"Really?"

"But her mother is a poodle."

"So, it's a..."

The name is where we fell short of a consensus. Some people called her a "curly golden," others a "goldie poo." My wife's solution was a cheerful: "We like to think of her as a golden with a bad hair day."

But this peculiar crossbreed has suddenly become a hot canine mix. We heard of one family who flew to Texas and paid four figures for one. And with four figures, you get a classy name: In breeder catalogs, our type of dog is now called a "goldendoodle."

This thoroughly goofy-sounding name has stuck. It also diminishes some of our dog's cachet. This was

### When your dog suddenly has a boldface name.

driven home when a woman in a fancy food shop in the Hamptons asked, "Goodness, what breed of dog might this be?"

"A goldendoodle!" my wife replied.

"Oh, so it's that mix."

That mix. Not only did the woman's condescension darken my mood. It gave me a first glimpse of what happens when something trendy becomes...not-so-trendy anymore. Could our beloved pup, much like fusion cuisine in the 1980s or tech stocks in the 90's, become time-locked? What would life be like with a passé puppy?

I did some research and found a dog breed Web site that shows that poodles are mixed more often than vodka and orange juice. Poodles are bred with bichons to make a bich-poo, with Chihuahuas to make a Chipoo, and with pugs to make a pugapoo. There also is a cockapoo (cocker spaniel and poodle), a daisy dog (bichon/poodle/shi-tzu), a schnoodle (schnauzer/poodle) and a doodle-

man pinscher (doberman/standard poodle).

It was amazing — and horrifying — to look at vivid photos of each crossbreed. It was like a scene from a horror movie, seeing the face of our beloved pooch trapped inside a strange body. Her sad eyes cried, "Woof! Get me out of here!"

I also foresaw the possibility that each of these poodle crossbreeds could become the next hot mix of the day, like a new flavor of iced coffee at Starbucks. In order to preserve our dog's fashionable status, we needed to come up with some form of trend slippage insurance. I would pad her crossbreed identity with continental pretension.

"What kind of dog is this?" asked a teenage girl outside a bagel shop. I decided to test out my ploy with the teenager, who looked like she was familiar with frivolous trends. After all, she was wearing a Von Dutch hat and nibbling a flagel.

"Oh, this old gal?" I exclaimed, rocking back on my heels, as if both startled and amused. "Why, she's a Royal Flemish Geldadooden!"

"A what?" the girl asked, as our dog licked her hand eagerly.

"Geldadooden!" I said with a chipper lilt. "As you can see, her grace and royal air are bred into her from generations of laying about the castle."

The girl shook her head and shuffled off, just as my wife came up behind me and caught me fibbing.

"What kind of lies, exactly, were you telling that young woman?" she asked, though she clearly knew the answer.

"I was merely explaining——"

"Well, next time stick to the truth," she said, cutting me short. "She's a goldendoodle."

"I hate that term!"

"Well, hate it or not, that's what she is," she said, with the firm air of one who is (almost always) right. Then she turned to our loving dog and gave her a kiss. "Isn't that right?" she cooed, "You're a doodle, doodle, doodle!"