



The late George.

me and my dog

## “It’s my belief we are the pets of dogs”

**PHILLIP ADAMS** and **PATRICE NEWELL** believe no one can get by without a dog.

Patrice. “To be happy I believe every house needs a baby. Babies are what life is all about and nothing makes me happier than when friends have babies. But if you can’t have a baby in the house, the next best thing is a dog.”

Over the years *Elmswood* has had many dogs and Phillip has written about most of them in his column in *The Australian*. But the columns that triggered the biggest response were those he wrote in 2004 about George, a dejected, terrified, starving Kelpie Cross he’d found hiding behind *Elmswood’s* dustbins.

Shivering with terror, snarling at whoever approached, Phillip slowly gained the dog’s trust. While George continued to snap and cower from other humans, he adored Phillip and the madcap Tommy, who’d take him off on adventures. “Barking ecstatically, they’d be gone for hours,” Phillip says.

Then one day just as George was beginning to gain confidence, he was killed by a large kangaroo that he and Tommy had been chasing. Phillip was devastated. “He was no longer cowering when you reached out to pat him, he was even conducting tentative experiments in tail wagging. For the first time in his miserable life he was having fun and that’s what killed him.”

Even with George’s departure however *Elmswood* is not lacking in dogs. Along with Tommy, there’s Rosie, the 10-year-old matriarch. “She’s really our neighbour Gavin

Prescott’s dog but he’s away quite a lot so she lives with us,” says Patrice. “She hangs out with the females of the family, spending her time with me and Aurora as one of the girls.”

According to Phillip there’s usually a Jack Russell around the house as well. “Because Jack Russells are totally insane and tend to produce more anecdotes per dog than all the other dogs put together,” he explains. “They have no idea of their size and think

Phillip Adams is excited. “We’ve just had a wedding,” announces the film-maker, columnist and presenter of ABC Radio National’s *Late Night Live*, his popular talk radio show. “We had the nuptials and cleared out the chooks from the chicken coop and turned it into a honeymoon suite.”

The occasion was the mating of Phillip’s Border Collie Cross Tommy, and a neighbour’s Border Collie. The mating took place at *Elmswood*, the 10,000 acre property in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW, that Phillip shares with his partner Patrice Newell, the former international model and television presenter now a cattle and olive biodynamic farmer and acclaimed author, and Aurora, the couple’s 13-year-old daughter.

“Tommy is useless around the farm and a complete ratbag but he’s a remarkable animal and can run about 50k easily and 100k if he wanted to. So, of course, we wanted to breed from him, and have at least one pup of our own that would be a proper working dog,” Phillip explains.

He peers into the chicken coop. “It was love at first sight but Tommy was a virgin as far as I know. Still he frolicked and cavorted and seemed to know what he was doing before they both disappeared into the egg-laying department. His bride has delivered only one pup but we have our fingers crossed that she’ll produce one or two more little Tommies in the future.”

At two, Tommy is all exuberance and zest, a typical teenage “boy”, and is adored by Aurora. “He makes us all smile,” says



Aurora with Tommy.



Patrice Newell and Phillip Adams with Rosie and Tommy.

they’re elephants so they always end up with snake bites or under a tractor wheel. But the place is not the same without them so we’ll be getting another one in the near future.”

As dogs and humans evolved in a remarkably short space of time – just 7000 years – Phillip continues to wonder whether we humans adopted dogs or they adopted us. “It’s my belief that we are the pets of dogs. We are their animal companions and I think it’s very nice of them to bother with us. Singles can get by without children, nuns

demonstrate they can get by without sex and our leading politicians show us they can get by without ethics or brains, but I don’t think anyone can get by without a dog.”

Patrice Newell’s new book, *Ten Thousand Acres, a Love Story*, (Lantern RRP \$49.95) pays homage to Australia’s unique and fragile landscape and re-evaluates the way we farm and care for it. Available in bookstores from April 3.

PHOTOGRAPH DAVID NOONAN