

By Elizabeth B. Olcott

Throughout my years in private practice I have met many delightful people and have had the joy of assisting them through some of the tougher times in their life. I have had many “different” clients. None however was quite as interesting as the dog, Lyric, that had a contract. Only in America! Yes in through my door came a dog with a contract problem. I had the distinct impression that some of my office mates were a bit dismayed but what the heck? A contact is a contract and a client is a client even if that client happens to be a dog. And this is indeed a true story.

Lyric was a beautiful Irish setter, who had earned fame by alerting authorities when her owner’s life was in imminent danger by the use of a specialized 911 device. Her quick action resulted in saving her owner’s life.

Through her owner, Lyric was being interviewed on numerous television talk shows including Maury Povitch and Oprah Winfry. She became known as the “911 Dog”. Thus Lyric was doing the talk show circuit and one particular entity wanted her to enter into a contract that contained somewhat onerous non-compete clauses. Lyric was not at all interested in the monies she earned from the television shows, instead her duty was to demonstrate to the viewing audiences how amazing these dogs could be in respect to their daily assistance and life-saving abilities for the disabled American.

Luckily, I love both dogs and contracts, and humor of course can add a little spice to even the driest of non-compete clauses. So when Lyric came to my offices in Concord, where I represent employers and employees in employment disputes and business clients in general business matters including contracts, I did not hesitate to take Lyric’s case.

In any case Lyric was good, she lay silently in my office while I read through her contract and finally advised her that she should not sign the contract as it would in essence defeat what her owner was attempting to do: show the world the wonders of assistance/guide dogs. The dog, unlike a few of my clients, promptly paid me \$25 for my labors and then reached up and sweetly kissed me. Her owner seemed somewhat surprised stating, "Wow, she refused to kiss Helen Hunt!" I was pleased, and tell this story with her owner’s permission and a lesson: payment is not just money, and it is the joy of a happy client.