# Chapter 1: Why the World Loves Poodles




A dog is a man’s best friend.

We've all heard this saying so often that it almost blends into the background of common wisdom. But anyone who has truly loved a dog knows the truth it carries. I didn't learn its meaning from a quote or a book; I learned it by growing up surrounded by poodles. Their soft curls brushed against my knees, their quiet breathing filled the house, and their steady

companionship asked for nothing more than closeness. Loyalty wasn't explained to me. I experienced it every day.

The phrase is said to trace back to King Frederick II of Prussia, a ruler who believed in reason and strategy, yet still recognized the simple devotion of a dog as something remarkable. I've always loved that detail. Even the most powerful people in history were humbled by the love of a dog.

Dogs have walked alongside humans through centuries of joy, grief, ordinary mornings, and quiet evenings. Now, in a world of endless screens and images, we see their love reflected everywhere. A dog resting its head on a knee. A joyful greeting at the door. A soft nuzzle in a moment when words would only get in the way.

So, I ask you: what dog lives in your heart?

Some may think of a golden retriever's warm grin, a pug's comic earnestness, or a German shepherd's dignified loyalty. No matter the breed, what draws us in is the same: dogs give us a place to land.

For me, that place has always been the poodle.

Poodles are often admired first for their elegance, but what stands out most is their depth. They think. They listen. They participate. Their coats (curls, soft cords, or plush waves) come in shades from cloud-white to deep espresso and silver. But it's their presence that stays with you. They're gentle enough to soothe and perceptive enough to protect. They seem to understand emotion not as a signal to respond to, but as something to share.

And what is it about the poodle that captures so many hearts?

This book is my way of exploring that answer. It is memory and history, personal and universal. It's the story of a breed that shaped my childhood, my understanding of love, and my belief in loyalty itself.

The poodle's story begins long before ribbons, grooming tables, and show crowds. Their origin lies beside cold European waterways, where they stood poised and ready to retrieve waterfowl. Their curly coats served as insulation, not decoration, and their movement through water was strong, sure, and purposeful. In that early work, the poodle's character took shape: focused, attentive, intuitive.

Anyone who has lived with a poodle recognizes that same quiet intelligence. They don't simply respond to commands; they consider them. They study you: the tone of your voice, the rhythm of your steps, even the silence in your pause. Their intelligence isn't loud; it's perceptive, thoughtful, and deeply connective.

As the world changed, the poodle evolved alongside it, not by losing its nature, but by expanding its role. They became therapy companions, steady in moments where reassurance mattered more than words. They learned to guide, to aid, to comfort. They became performers too, not out of novelty, but because they genuinely enjoy being engaged, included, and understood.

And of course, they came home to families. To living rooms. To laps and porches and childhood bedrooms. A poodle doesn't just exist in your home. A poodle integrates itself into your life.

Their adaptability is one of their great gifts. A Toy Poodle fits quietly into a small space and offers gentle companionship. A Miniature thrives in the rhythm of a busy household. A Standard Poodle can feel both elegant and deeply grounding, filling a room not with

noise, but with presence. Their hypoallergenic coats allow closeness even in homes where allergies once kept distance, making connection physically possible and emotionally effortless.

Their cultural identity blossomed in France. The German name pudel, "to splash," reflects their playful, working beginnings. The French name Caniche, "duck dog," honors their purpose. From practical hunter to refined companion, both identities remain true.

They were embraced in French courts, but they didn't lose their grounded nature. They remained seekers, doers, joy-givers. They hunted truffles in quiet forests. They performed with charm and precision in traveling shows. Eventually, they stepped into the world of dog competition, where their structure, movement, and presence became art in motion.

Yet through all these transformations, one thing has stayed constant:

The poodle loves with intention.

As the poodle evolved from water retriever to performer to companion, one thing about the breed never changed: poodles are, at their core, working

dogs with heart. Yes, they're elegant. Yes, they can look like four-legged royalty. But underneath the topknot and coat care is a dog who loves to learn, loves to participate, and loves to be part of your life. Their refinement comes from purpose, not decoration, and that's what makes them extraordinary.

Today, two organizations guide much of what keeps the poodle true to itself: the American Kennel Club and the Poodle Club of America.

The AKC has been the guardian of purebred dog standards since 1884. It doesn't just host dog shows; it protects the integrity, health, and future of breeds. For poodles, the AKC holds the breed standard, essentially what makes a poodle a poodle. Balance. Structure. Movement. Temperament. Intelligence. These standards aren't about being fancy. They're about preserving what matters.

Responsible breeders understand this deeply. Producing a litter isn't about making puppies to sell; it's about continuing a lineage thoughtfully. Health, temperament, structure, and a clear understanding of where each dog will go matter more than anything else. As Anna Katherine Nicholas wrote in The Poodle, true

breeding comes from a desire to improve, never simply to produce.

I learned that early in life. Not from a book, but from watching my mother, Carol Makin, work. She didn't talk about breeding casually. She evaluated. She studied pedigrees. She understood the relationship between type, temperament, and movement. She knew when a match would strengthen a line and when it wouldn't. And she taught me, without ever needing to say it outright, that a poodle is never "just a dog." A poodle is a life you take into your arms and into your heart.

The Poodle Club of America has carried that same spirit since 1896. The PCA is the home base for poodle lovers: breeders, handlers, owners, and admirers. Every year, the PCA National Specialty brings together the best of the breed from across the country. It's not just a show; it's a celebration of history, knowledge, dedication, and love.

These organizations, along with the breeders who live by their principles, ensure that poodles stay healthy, sharp, emotionally attuned, and true to the nature that has made them beloved for centuries.

So, when you see a poodle in the ring, or curled asleep by someone's feet, you're looking at more than a beautiful dog.

You're looking at history, devotion, and love, passed down from one generation to the next.

Growing up, there were always poodles around me, never just one or two, but an entire community of soft curls and bright eyes. At any given time, our home held twenty show poodles, each with their own personality, quirks, and place in the rhythm of daily life. My mother, Carol Makin, was an AKC judge and professional handler, and she moved among them with a confidence and gentleness I admired long before I understood it. For me, poodles weren't pets. They were the backdrop of my childhood: constant, comforting, and alive with presence.

The sound I remember most is the sound of the grooming room. The steady hum of dryers, the gentle snip of scissors, the low click of clippers against a clean coat. Those sounds were like a heartbeat in our house, always there, always familiar. I could fall asleep to them, think of them, and wake up knowing the day had already begun.

By the time I was seven, I was living the show-dog life in motion. We traveled across the country in a van fitted for crates, grooming tables, tack boxes, brushes, bows, dog pens, spray bottles, and snacks tucked into every available corner. What began as "going along with Mom" turned into a full apprenticeship without anyone having to name it. I learned to groom, scissor, shave, and make a topknot, to show, and to stay calm in the ring even when my heart was pounding. I became an AKC Junior Showmanship handler, and I took pride in every moment of it.

Showing poodles wasn't an activity; it was a world. My world. There was a rhythm to it: wake early, groom carefully, breathe steady, walk into the ring like you belong there. I learned everything: how to raise puppies, how to understand pedigree and structure, how to see not just the dog in front of you, but the generations behind them.

It was love, yes, but it was also work. Real work. And I loved every part of it.

This was where my bond with poodles deepened into something permanent. They were my playmates and my teachers. They were comfort when I was

overwhelmed, company when I was lonely, and joy (always joy) simply by being near.

I didn't realize it then, but my childhood with poodles would shape everything that came after: how I connect, how I observe, how I care, how I trust.

When you grow up loved by poodles, you learn early that love can be quiet, steady, and intensely loyal.

And that kind of love stays with you.