

Ears Up, Ears Down



by Ralph da Costa Nunez

with Margaret Menghini

Introduction by Leonard N. Stern

Illustrated by Madeline Gerstein Simon

Ears Up, Ears Down

a dog's journey home



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with Margaret Menghini

Introduction

Ears Up, Ears Down is the sixth volume in our ongoing series of children's books dealing with the issue of family homelessness. Completed in the shadow of the Great Recession, and with poverty at one of the highest rates in our time, it is the story of a curious dog named Ears Up, Ears Down who encounters homelessness for the first time.

Readers follow his journey, and learn, as he does, the reasons people are left without a home. The men, women, and children Ears Up, Ears Down meets also help him consider the emotions people feel when they experience homelessness. As our story concludes *Ears Up, Ears Down* shines a light on the greatest part of our society: the kindness and generosity of the community, working together to help those in need.

It is our hope that *Ears Up, Ears Down* will serve as a tool to foster conversations between parents and teachers and their children, and to bring awareness to one of the most important issues our nation faces.

Leonard N. Stern
Founder/Chairman, Homes for the Homeless
New York City

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Hello!

My name is Ears Up, Ears Down.

I'm going to tell you a story. It's about a journey I took,
the lessons I learned, and how I got my name.



From the time I was a puppy, I lived and worked at Jim's Junkyard. A junkyard is a place that collects and stores unwanted things. Jim owned it.

I was a watchdog at the junkyard and working there made me happy. That's how I got my name Ears Up. When I'm happy my ears shoot up towards the sky. I was always happy working at Jim's Junkyard.



One morning I heard a loud banging. A man was nailing a sign on the gates. It said "FORECLOSED."

"What does 'foreclosed' mean?" I barked.

"The junkyard is being closed. You and I need to find a new job and new home," said Jim.

We had worked together for 10 years, but that was ending. Right then my big perky ears fell down.

I was very sad.



BANG!

BANG

So the next morning I packed my things,
said goodbye to Jim, and set out on my way.

"Now what?" I thought.

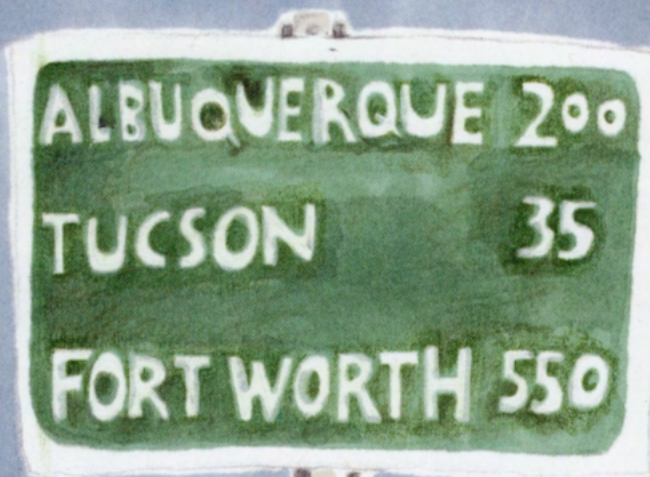
I was so sad. My ears hung very low.

FOREC



I walked for hours and hours, and it was getting dark. I lay down under a road sign. I looked at the stars and thought about my doghouse and how I missed the junkyard.

Before long I was fast asleep.



The next morning I set out to find a new job and home. The highway was long. Every time a car drove by I would sit up, wag my tail, and flap my ears. I hoped someone would stop and pick me up.

But no one did.



Late in the afternoon I came to a rest stop.
As I walked I found a boy and girl sitting
next to a green car.





I barked, "What's your name?"

"I'm Brian," and "I'm Emily."

"What's your name?"

"I'm Ears Up."

"Ears Up? But your ears are down," Brian said.

"I know. It's because I'm sad. When I'm sad my ears hang down."

"Are you lost?" Brian asked.

"No. I'm looking for a new home and a job.
Where do you live?"

"In this car," Emily said, pointing to the car.

"But cars are not for living in. Cars are for driving in," I barked.





"We sleep and eat in our car. It is our home," Brian replied.

"You mean you don't have your own room and yard to play in?" I asked.

"We used to," Brian said, "but our dad lost his job and they took our house."

"Wow!" I thought. "I lost my job and my house, too!"

"Then you are homeless like us," Emily said.

"Homeless? What's that?" I asked.

"Homeless is when you do not have a place to live, no home of your own," Emily said. "Sometimes you live in a room with other families. Sometimes you live in a car like us.

And most of the time you just feel sad."



I lay down. My ears were drooping so low they touched the ground.

Then Brian said, "I guess we should call you 'Ears Down' now."

And that is how I got my other name, Ears Down.

That night I slept next to the car where Emily, Brian, and their parents lived.





The next day we all set off together.





After a few hours we came to a campground. It was very big with lots of tents and people living in them. Everyone had a story to tell. I met Keith, a carpenter, who had no work because no houses were being built.



I met Mr. Walker, a banker, whose bank had closed.

And I met Ms. Robinson, a cook whose restaurant had closed.

They had lost their homes, too.

I slept at the camp that night. I looked at the moon as I fell asleep and wondered, "Why are so many people homeless, living in tents and cars? It's not right."

My ears hung lower.





When I woke the next morning, I could smell food. Dogs are very good at that! And there it was, a big blue van with windows and people in a line.

"What is going on?" I asked.

"It's the breakfast van. They visit the camp every day to give everyone a healthy breakfast," Ms. Robinson said.





"Do you think they'll feed a dog?" I asked.

"Why not?" she replied.

And before long I was eating a big bowl of crunchy dog food.

When I was finished I went to visit the van and barked a loud "Thank you!"

crunchy



Ms. Grace, who works in the van, said,
"What a nice dog."

"Where are your collar and dog tag?"

"I don't have one because I don't
have a home. My name is Ears Down.
See how low my ears are?"





Then she thought for a minute and said,
"Would you like to work with me? Most of
the people we serve are sad and I think
you would cheer them up by letting them pet
you and shake your paw."

My tail started to wag. A new home and job!
I barked, "YES! YES! YES!"

My ears shot straight up to the sky.

That afternoon Ms. Grace took me to the
store to get a new collar and dog tag.

When the man asked what name I wanted on
the tag, I barked, "Ears Up, Ears Down."



I am happy now because I have a new home and job. I get to help people every day, so my ears stand up. I've met people who don't have homes of their own, which makes me sad, and makes my ears hang down.

So from now on my name is Ears Up, Ears Down. When people ask why I have such a funny name, I will tell them my story (just like I've told you today) and what I learned about being homeless. Until there are no more people or animals without a home, my ears will stay halfway up and halfway down.

The end.





Our
Wish



cooper's
tale



Saily's Journey



Ears Up,
Ears Down

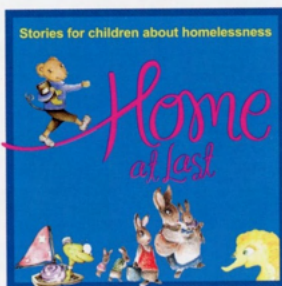


mango's quest



Read and collect all six!

All of our publications are available for purchase online at the
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Home at Last is a collection of animated videos on family homelessness and poverty for grades K-5, based on the children's books by Ralph da Costa Nunez.



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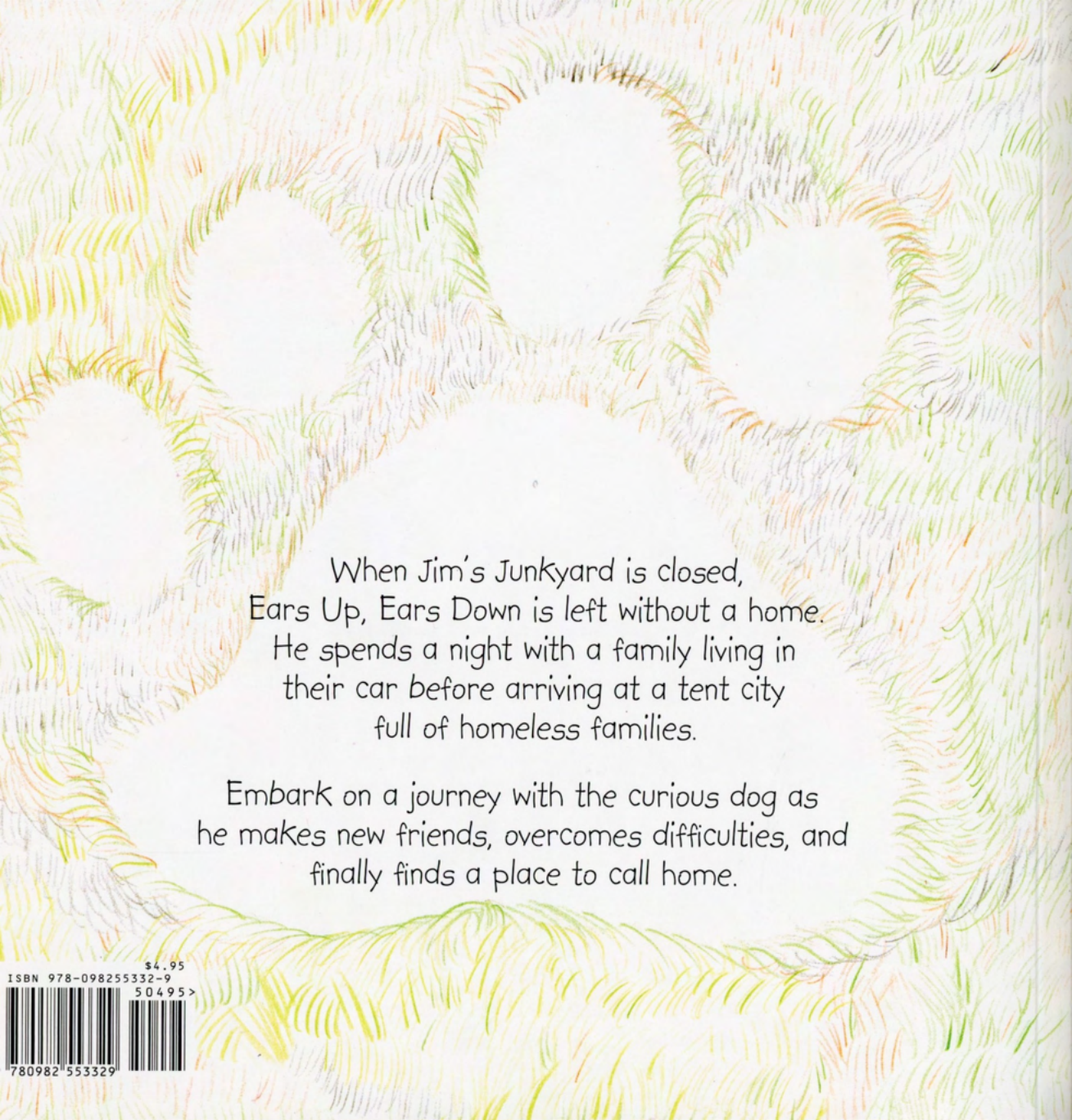


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All of the children's books published by White Tiger Press are the result of a collaboration among three organizations: White Tiger Press, the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, and Homes for the Homeless.



When Jim's Junkyard is closed,
Ears Up, Ears Down is left without a home.
He spends a night with a family living in
their car before arriving at a tent city
full of homeless families.

Embark on a journey with the curious dog as
he makes new friends, overcomes difficulties, and
finally finds a place to call home.

\$4.95

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