



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I was born in Iowa and raised in a rural community and on a family farm. I attended Iowa State University with my identical twin brother, Rick, and we both graduated in 1975 from the Iowa State College of Veterinary Medicine. I grew up always loving animals, and we had many pets during my early years. When we moved from a small southwestern Iowa town to the farm, we acquired even more pets, having two German Shepherds (Silver and Princess) and one very large Malamute named Dink. We also had many farm cats, raised pigs, and cared for feedlot calves. Needless to say, it was an excellent opportunity to develop a special heart for the care of animals. Our first “patient” was a baby piglet attacked by some feral dogs in our barnyard and left for dead. We found her one cold spring morning buried in the mud with all muscle and skin chewed off her entire dorsal body, leaving her vertical spinous processes exposed.



She was hypothermic, bleeding badly, and not breathing when we found her. Rick and I took turns forcibly breathing air into her lungs, and by God’s grace, she started breathing again. Dad okayed our rescue attempts, so we immediately took the piglet into the house and warmed her up and cleaned her wounds. Rick and I slept by her side for three or four days to care for her wounds and manually feed her until we were sure she was strong enough to go back outside. She slowly improved, and when she had sufficiently recovered, we took her out to the barn and kept her in a large box in our feed room with a heat lamp and three dogs excited to meet this new acquaintance.

Her name was Brownie, and once she recovered, she was a typical rambunctious piglet with one exception: she was raised with our three dogs, so this was her new family! Our dogs loved her and adopted her as one of their own, and Brownie grew up believing she was not a pig. Instead, she was sure she was a dog, albeit an unusual looking one. She was allowed to roam free on our farm with the dogs and soon did her best imitation of a dog. She attempted to chase rabbits and squirrels (with very little success) and would greet any visitors to our farm as one of four canines guarding the homestead, circling any visiting vehicle and oinking joyfully in chorus as her family barked alerts to the Lange family that someone was entering our farmyard. Brownie was a big reason Rick and I decided to pursue careers in veterinary medicine.

While at Iowa State, Rick and I had a pet raccoon named Sean Coonery, whom we acquired from a professional raccoon breeder. He was totally litter-trained, had free rein of our apartment, and was a most unusual pet. He loved both Rick and me and would shuttle back and forth between our beds every night, snuggling up close to each of us under the covers until he decided it was time to move to the other brother. He was leash-trained, and we would walk him around the sorority houses. We were amazed at how easy it was to meet so many beautiful young ladies as they came out to meet Sean! Rick and I graduated from ISU in 1975, and Christy and I moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, where I began my small animal veterinary career. From Hawaii we moved to Miami, Florida, to be closer to Rick, who was practicing in Hollywood, Florida. After much research and deliberation, we selected Knoxville, Tennessee, to be our new home. In 1977, together, we opened Lange Animal Hospital. Rick was unfortunately killed in a car accident in 1999. I managed and owned the hospital alone until my retirement in May of 2021. There are currently five veterinarians serving our clients. I now spend my time writing, working out, and playing pickleball. My wife Christy and I have our sixth Golden Retriever, Josh 4.0.





I began writing children's books after my daughter, Jessica, had surgery at East Tennessee Children's Hospital at the age of nine. While she was in surgery, I nervously roamed the hallways and noted about one in three children's rooms had no adult present. I questioned the nurses, and they advised that many of these kids were "drop offs," which meant these children were literally dropped off and left alone for whatever procedure they required and then were picked up to go home. This obviously upset me until they explained that most of the time it was a single parent situation (mostly female), there was typically more than one child in the family, and mom had to work to keep her job so she could keep their health insurance, pay the bills, and care for the other kids. These children were obviously scared and alone, and I decided that night I was going to do something about that.

I resolved that no child should ever have to be alone in a hospital, and the genesis of the Josh Project began. I wrote my first book, *I'll Be O.K.*, and included an amazing plush Josh puppy with the book, which took a child through a hospital visit as seen through the eyes of Josh, a golden retriever who had a health problem which required diagnostic testing, surgery, and recovery at a small animal hospital. The book was named *I'll Be O.K.* since the overriding theme from start to finish was that no matter how scared or upset Josh became during his experience in the hospital, he knew that he would be O.K.! And he was! This book and puppy set have helped tens of thousands of children across America and throughout the world, bringing hope to kids with health care problems. We were endorsed by the Children's Miracle Network, and my living Josh dog and I then travelled from coast to coast for twenty-five years to visit children's hospitals and thousands of kids and their families.

My second book is called *G.I. Josh I'll Be O.K.* and was written in partnership with The American Legion. It's the story of a young girl named Cassie whose father is in the military and is deployed overseas, leaving her mother and her alone at home. For financial reasons, they are forced to move in with their family, and this story chronicles Cassie's new furry neighbors, Josh and Smudge. Josh and Smudge befriend Cassie and cooperatively help her deal with the stress the military family experiences when a loved parent or sibling is deployed for an extended period of time. I included a GI Josh golden retriever plush puppy who accompanied readers during stressful times. We have benefitted thousands of military families over the years and are proud to have partnered with the American Legion on this special project.

My third book is *The Elk Horn Grove Adventure* and is the first in a series of Josh and Smudge adventure books, which remind children that they are never alone, and that no matter what they are currently experiencing in life, everything will work out. This book includes what I call "Life threatening, life changing" adventures, which Josh and Smudge and their animal friends share. During this adventure, they learn that they must work together and depend on each other, especially during difficult times, which we all experience during our lifetimes. Josh and Smudge act out and share the Judeo-Christian values by which I was raised in a rural Iowa community in the 1950s and 1960s. Children today need this message of hope, and I do this in an exciting format that children enjoy. My fourth book, *The Smoky Mountain Adventure*, takes place at Cades Cove in the Smoky Mountains. Again, Josh and Smudge and their mountain friends are involved in a life-threatening, life-changing adventure which teaches children the value of loving and caring for others. My fifth book is *My Pet Dog Brownie*, which chronicles the story of our pet pig, Brownie, and shares many lessons that children can learn from this captivating and fun story.

I write these books for one reason: to help children using the amazing power of the human-animal bond. Josh and Smudge are two characters who can touch a child's heart in a way that humans cannot, and the messages they share will benefit children for years to come.

My illustrator is Lesley James, a remarkable artist in Abingdon, Virginia, who captures Josh and Smudge and their animal friends with a unique style that children will love.

