

## A Boy and His Dog (Posted 3-16-2008)

Last January, I got me a dog. Normally, this isn't considered a newsworthy event, but to me, a man in his fifties, who hasn't had a dog since he was 4, and never had small children, it has turned into a truly life-changing event.

I work from home and because of this, I don't get out much. Oh, I love the commute, and the dress code isn't bad either, but somedays I get downright lonely. I was feeling especially lonely a couple of days after Christmas when my wife came home to find me under my desk in a fetal position, sobbing softly and muttering "all alone, so all alone". She looked down at me and smiled in that way that let me know she was going to make everything all right as she asked "Are you lonely?" Looking up at her through my tears, I nodded slowly. Assessing my sorry state, she then asked "How would you like to get a dog?" I jumped up and whacked my head on the bottom of the desk. When I came to, I whacked my head again (though not as hard), grabbed my keys, and stumbled out the door headed for the local doggie jail.

It seems to me that if you are going to get a pet, there is something noble about adopting a stray or abandoned animal. I also thought that it would be cheaper than buying new. Boy, did I learn different about that. Oh, the feeling of being noble is there alright. I went into the local animal shelter to find a virtual cornucopia of stray and abandoned dogs (and cats, and ferrets, etc.) all hoping that you will be the one to take them home. It's a tough choice as the ugly ones tug at your heart, while the cute ones feed your vanity. I went for cute, and after they did her physical and spayed her (to make Bob Barker happy), they told me that she was heart-worm positive, which meant she had a bunch of nasty worms living in her heart. Ugh. They also said that due to the heartworm, I didn't have to take her because it could get expensive to fix, she would need a lot of care, and that any damage the worms had already done could not be reversed. Being the logical, prudent person that I am, there was only one thing to do. I took her home.

Due to HIPAA regulations, I can't share her medical history, though I can say that if it wasn't for her, today I would be driving a new Mustang, the one with the V-8. I think I'm happier with the dog. You other dog owners understand.

The next task was to give her a name. Down at the doggie jail they called her Priscilla. That wasn't going to work. Priscilla may have been attractive to Elvis, but for me the name conjures up visions of 80 year-old spinster aunts (Sorry Mrs. Presley). So I decided on Heather. Don't ask. If I'm not admitting to my wife why I picked the name, I'm certainly not telling you.

Why the story about my dog? Besides the fact that I like to brag on her, I'm 98.74% sure that I am taking her with me when I go fishing at Boreal Bay Lodge this year. I'm hoping that the two of us will have an adventure worthy of my next novel, but I fear it may be more like a Coen Brothers movie. I considered flying, but with all of the airline's silly rules about not allowing dogs in the cabin, I decided to go another way. That means the two of us will share the joy of spending three days together (each way) in my luxurious PT Cruiser. She really likes riding in the car, especially when we go to Mickey D's, but three days could be a little tough on her. I just hope she doesn't fall asleep while she's driving like I do.

I'm not sure what will happen after we get there. Will she enjoy being on a boat, or will she become this

year's PITA? Will she sit quietly out of the way, saving all her energy to bark at each fish we land, or will she jump out of the boat every chance she gets to show me she can't swim? I guess the only way to find out will be to take her and see. Let's hope she opts for the former, because the lake can be a bit chilly in June, and I don't plan on going in after her.

If nothing else, the trip should give me something (besides all the fish I catch) to write about in July, and give Heather an idea about what lies beyond the back fence. Hmmm. "Beyond the back fence". Sounds like a good name for a book written from the dog's perspective. There's a thought. Naw. That would be as silly as a story told by a tackle box.

Time to feed the dog.

Tom