

PATSY AND "HER PEOPLE"

A Dog's True Life Story On The Triangle Dairy Farm

One day I found that the people to whom I belonged no longer wanted me. They took me to a place with a high fence inside of which were many cages with dogs in them. I was amazed to see so many sizes and shapes. There was one, he was tall and ugly looking with bleary eyes. I hated him. There was another stretched out too long, with little short four inch legs. He was friendly however and wagged his tail as I was placed in a vacant cage next to him. Of course, I did not understand what the place was all about. Many looked frightened. It was then I learned that those who had been there a long time seemingly unwanted by a master, feared for their lives. It was understandable that the kennel keeper could not feed all of us and keep us alive forever.

After a frightful week of waiting, the joyful day arrived. One who was to become my new master was walking about and looking us over. He halted at my cage and asked the keeper how old I was. He said, "Not quite a year, I think." He further stated that I was a spayed female. I learned from their conversation that I was to be forever puppyless. The man said that I was just what he was looking for. He talked to me in a quiet gentle tone and did not try to touch me which was to my liking. I did not lick his hand like the other dogs did and he liked that.

The keeper loaded me on the rear of a small truck. I was securely tied so that I could not jump out and run away. This I would have done if possible, for I feared cars and I never learned to like them well enough to enjoy riding in them. I saw my new master hand the keeper five dollars and off we went.

We finally arrived at my new home. I was lifted from the truck and led by a leash to a big building filled with huge animals. Somehow my instinct told me that I would learn to like these animals called cows. Whenever a stable door was left open, I was tied and when the doors were not open, I was left untied to wonder around at will. I was given wonderful food and large pan full of milk.

There was a young man. He too spoke very kindly to me and did not force himself upon me. For three days I observed the routine of milking and feeding, always being treated so nicely that I made up my mind that we were to become firm friends. So on the evening of the third day, while my master was squatting and washing a cow in preparation for milking I walked up to him and rested my head on his arm, whereupon he called to Dan, "Look at Patsy". I began to understand that the special sound "Patsy" meant that I was wanted and was to pay attention. He put his hand, oh so gently, on my head and scratched behind my ears. It felt good; it was a warm and friendly gesture. For some reason my pan of milk was made fuller that evening by Dan.

After several more days, I learned that my milk must be shared with an old Mammy cat. I always drank all of the milk, but now I was to be taught to wait until the cat had all she wanted and then I would get mine. About the first word I learned of my master's language was "down" or at least that was what it sounded like to me. My master, gently pulled me away from that delicious pan of milk, pushed me down, repeating that word, "down," It was about ten feet from the pan. For several days I would walk to the pan too soon and always he would pull me back and make me lie down.

I learned two more words, "all right." After several days more he would always say, "all right" when that cat would walk away from the milk. He would make me get up repeating, "all right" and lead me to the pan. It was not more than a week until I had learned to voluntarily lie about ten feet from that pan until Mammy finished, but she would take such a long time finishing and I think probably just to frustrate me, she would sit and wash herself right at the pan, rather than do the courteous thing and walk away to do her washing.

One evening Mammy came into the stable with a little baby, left and brought back a second and then a third. After she had deposited the third at the pan to wait being served milk, she left as if though to go for a fourth kitten. Now, she was not as intelligent as I and could not count, so she had to go back to make sure she had all her babies. I now had to wait until she had trained her family to drink and all four walked away. Sometimes the rascals would choose to play around the pan. I never cheated. It was customary to pour milk in the pan from the last bucket of milk after which the stable lights would be turned out. The milking machine outfit was washed in the milk house. Occasionally my master would for some reason open the stable door and switch on the lights. I noticed *he* did not look at the cows but

instead he would look at me and the pan of milk. I rather believe he was checking to see if I was dutifully waiting until those awful cats were through.

One time Mammy began to walk away from the pan, joyfully, I jumped up to go to the pan, whereupon she changed her mind and returned for a few more swallows. I believe that was the only time I thought some unprintable words in my life.

I was so pleased and so happy in my new home, Dan and the master. They made a hole in the stable door so I could enter when the weather was cold or wet. They took me to the house to meet the mistress. She thought I was pretty, placed her hand lightly on my head, then withdrew it saying, "I don't like to touch animals, they are dirty." That really hurt me because I wanted her to like me too. Thus she became a problem. The men wanted me to be in the house with them and she would not allow it, but I won her favor as time went on. I will tell how, later on.

A wild and exhilarating run to the field each day was looked forward to. This took place when the daily load of manure was hauled to the field. The tractor and spreader made one continuous run to the field, never stopping until it returned to the barn. I was never allowed and therefore never attempted to follow any other equipment to the fields because it was feared that on some hot day I might lay in the shade of a wagon, too close to a wheel and get injured or even killed when the equipment began to move. I never ventured beyond the lawn because of traffic and then too, there was too much around the house and buildings, requiring my close attention. I learned to catch rats and I would appear suddenly over the rise of the barn bridge to scare several hapless birds. Try as hard as I might, I never succeeded in catching one of these birds. One time I caught a squirrel and I learned to leave those rats with bushy tails alone because for some reason they were called squirrels.

I would communicate on occasion via dog language by long distance with neighbor dogs. I never associated with any of them personally. One night an argument with one of them became too loud and long. My master called from his bedroom window for me to keep quiet. In doing so I was unable to reply to that neighbor dog and so she claimed to have won the argument because I ceased to answer.

Nights were sometimes unbearably long as I lay by the kitchen door awaiting my master. He would light the stable lights and open the pasture fence whereupon it was my special duty to race out into the field, round up our herd of cows and return them for milking. I learned that when it was still dark and if fog had set in during the night, the cows would stray and not remain in herd formation. Having never been taught how to count, at least not to a very high figure, I could not determine if I had found all of them. After they were in the stable and I saw an empty stall, I did not have to be told to go back and find the stray. They would proceed with the milking operation while I brought in the lost.

One time my master brought home a big black cat with white feet. He was called "Slippers." He was not like Mammy, he was a pal. He even followed the master and me to the field but he never learned to bring in the cows. He would always wait with me for the master in the early morning at the kitchen door. He was intelligent, my master said, but I thought he was rather dumb because he would not cross the creek when we went for the cows. He would sit right down and holler until the master picked him up and put him on his shoulder. I think he was just too lazy to walk and would sometimes jump up upon the master's shoulder and thus be carried from place to place.

It was not long until I appeared to be alarmed when it thundered. The mistress sat close to a window. I would place my feet on the window sill and whimper, whereupon she took pity and would take me inside for the duration of the storm. I was assigned one particular rug to lie on. With the aid of the men I gradually gained admittance more often and for longer stays, until it became routine for me to be with my family. I always had my place on the rug before the fireplace. Sometimes the master would say, "Patsy, get on your rug." I knew I was on the rug and that he was only teasing and I would look him squarely in the eye. However on occasion, just to please him, I would rise, turn several times in a circle, and lie down again, and that would make him laugh.

If my coat was wet I was allowed to enter the house after learning three more words. They were "in the study." Here I had to go and remain until dry. They would call me when it was thought that I was dry, whereupon I went to my rug in the living room. More often than not they would forget me. Now, they v never taught me the time, so I had to guess *if* I had dried long enough, then venture into the living room and all would say, "Poor Patsy, we forgot to call her", or at least that is what it seemed like to me.

I soon learned without being told to go voluntarily to the study first, upon entering the house, if I was wet.

The evening was most enjoyable for me after a hard day's work. After the milking was finished, all would rush for the shower, and then relax for a few minutes in the living room while dinner was being finished. The mistress would call "Come and get it," I would be the first to be on my feet and head for the dinner table. Always upon leaving the living room I would look back to see if the master had heard the call. During dinner Dan was my favorite. I would sit with my nose at his elbow because he would slip me many wonderful morsels. The master would try to get my attention, only teasing; I would never as much as turn my head in his direction.

Brooke, another young man, came home from college. Somehow he knew just what to do around the place, and then I realized he was Dan's brother. He began much discussion on the question, "Should we invite an exchange student to our home for one year?" The decision was yes and it would be a girl named Ilse. The time arrived for Brooke, the master and mistress, to go meet and bring her home. They said she arrived by ship in New York City. Well, I never found out what a ship was but she would use a train to go to Washington. I knew what a train was for many passed our farm every day. Not knowing where Washington was I saw them leave by car. I imagined it might be beyond the second hills. How was I to know for I never left our farm to look, it must have been much further for it took them two long days and a night, leaving Dan and me to care for the cows. They finally arrived with Use. It was my policy not to get acquainted with strangers until I had adequate time to look them over. However, I heard so much conversation about Ilse; I had no doubts about her so I walked up to her, sat down on my hind legs, and proceeded to offer to shake hands. She accepted and stroked the top of my head. At the moment Dan left the stable, he was in the midst of milking; he shook hands with Ilse and hurried back to the barn. I then knew I had done the right thing by shaking Use's hand because Dan had done so.

I loved to hear the master argue the relative merits of Golden Guernsey Milk produced by our pure bred Guernsey dairy herd. I heard a man tell him that a Guernsey would not produce enough to fill a pail with milk and his reply was that he would rather see a pail half full of Guernsey milk into which he could drop a quarter and not be able to see it in the bottom while a milk pail full of Holstein milk one could see the quarter on the bottom and read the date on the coin. My master said he liked Guernsey's cream because it could be hung on a nail. How I wished I could find a nail full of Guernsey cream but I never did and I guess if I had, the nail would be too high for me to reach for licking purposes.

With the passing of time, I learned many words and phrases. "Get the birdies" would make me wild with excitement. We would go to the fields, he with gun in hand. His every command was a pleasure for I loved to please. The sound and sight of cars entering our lane indicated in advance who was coming home. One time the master and Dan came home in Brooke's car. For some reason I was, fooled and surprised when they got out, instead of seeing Brooke, I walked away with my head low and they laughed at me.

It was my duty to protect the best interests of my family including their friends if in dire circumstances. Friends living in another house on our farm had a little girl. While I never associated with them I knew I must tell someone that I found their little girl lost in high grass in the meadow. I stood on a hill and barked until I had someone's attention. It was the master who I attracted and he always understood me. I led him to the little girl though she belonged to another family and not mine.

On another occasion I thought I was doing the right thing. A man with a truck parked outside our kitchen door. He began loading bundles of paper. I made him get back into the truck so he could take no more of our property. My people were all working inside the house. When the man did not return to the kitchen, the master came looking for him, saw what I was doing, petted me, and told me sternly, "It's alright," which of course, relieved me of my duty. I never bit anyone for I found I could make a culprit understand without going that far. At another time several men opened the barn doors, backed a big truck into it. They climbed from the truck into the hay mow and began throwing our bales into the truck. My master seemed to be standing by helplessly, so I thought I'd better help him and began to chew on of the tires. Lucky for them, the master understood and told me, "It's alright" whereupon I lay down in some shade but kept both eyes on the men just in case.

I loved the master's beautiful herd. The neighbor kept some of those awful black and white cows. One

time they were grazing along a boundary fence at were looking at our cows. I was afraid they would get too close and some of the black might rub off, so I chased them back. The master was standing on the quarry hill and saw what I had done. He did not scold me but told me it was all right and thus I had no further worry.

I had learned to recognize Harriet's car even though she visited only about once a month. I would greet her when she arrived. She was our dairy herd improvement milk tester. However, one summer I had quite a time learning to know who all belonged to "my people." My mistresses' father came to live with us. He was an old man and needed special protection. When he left the house for the mail, I always went with him but only to the end of the lane. I never walked on the highway. Ilse had joined us, she had two girls visit and then Brooke brought another fellow, six feet, four inches tall, from college. He liked me; he had a funny accent I believe they called German. His name was Herwig. With all of the excitement my master never forgot me, he always had a kind word and greeting for me. He would take walks over his fields and always invite me to run along. We would play games. Sometimes when I was some distance from him he would hold his hand high and a bit forward. This meant I was to "down." I would "stay" until he would raise his arm and hand again, but this time if he waved it in a circle above his head it meant "alright." Then I would jump up and run again. Sometimes he would hide, then whittle, but I could always find him.

After some years...

The boys were no longer working on the farm. Those lovely cows were sold and of all things, young chickens were placed in the stable. I was allowed to walk quietly at the master's heels among them. When they had to be taught to gather on roosts at dusk, I was assigned the task. The roosts were at one end of the stable. The master would call me and we would enter and he remained at the door. I followed his arm and hand signals. By the end of the third evening I knew just what to do and would trot back and forth and slowly chase all of those chickens to the roosting end of the stable. After the last one was on a roost I would run to the master and he would always say, "good girl" and show me his pleasure.

As the years passed I found that I could not run, jump the wall, and chase the "birdies" as I once did, but the master never seemed to mind. Ilse had left and so had Herwig. Brooke was married to a girl named Terry, very pretty but she kept him somewhere else for he seldom came home. Dan no longer helped to farm.

I guess I lived what they call a "dog's life" but in my case, packed with many happy moments. How fortunate I was when the master chose me from among all those other dogs. I hope doggy heaven will be as nice as it was for me with "my people."

Harry N. Althouse "the master"

[Althouse, Harry N.; Althaus – Althouse; A genealogical booklet; 1977]