

Buddy

Literature is teeming with dog stories, including *Treve*, one of very few books I struggled through as a kid. There are songs like *Old Shep* and poems like the one Jimmy Stuart wrote and read about his dog Beau on the Johnny Carson show with both of them wiping tears from their cheeks. Many of these tales are true and most all of them favorable. This one is both.

My parents did not like dogs and like other animals used for food or work were of the lower kingdoms created by God for man's use. Since they had no use for them, they were essentially worthless from their perspective. I did have a dog occasionally and I say occasionally because it did not provide a very ideal situation for a dog. Dogs ate scraps, slept outside, did not receive veterinary care in desperate situations, etc. But I loved dogs and other animals including my horse, rabbit, and rooster and have always been uncertain with regard to what species belongs at the top of the pyramid of being. Kay's parents did not have as austere a view of dogs, so Kay more naturally grew up a lover of animals, including the horses which came to dominate our family's life as she became a thoroughbred racehorse trainer. Ultimately, we had a pretty major horse breeding and training operation at our ranch near Enumclaw, Washington.



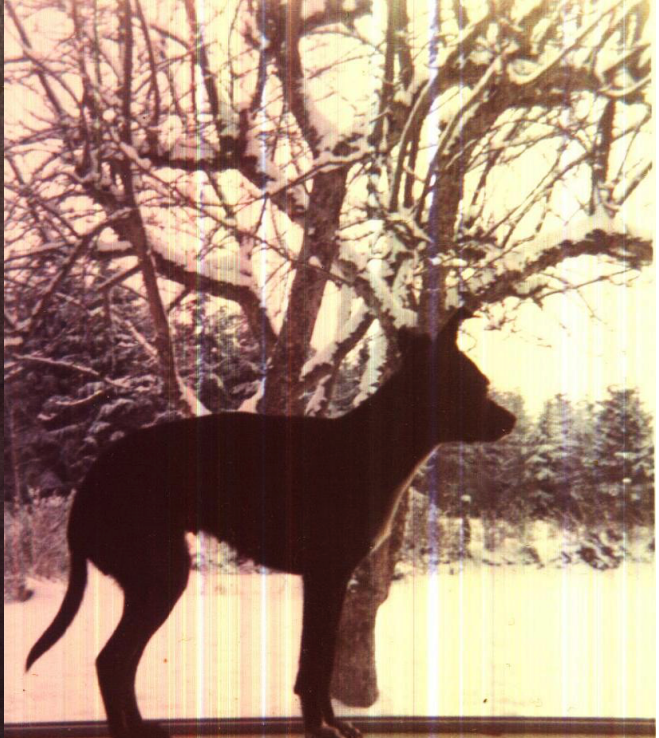
Growing up without dogs



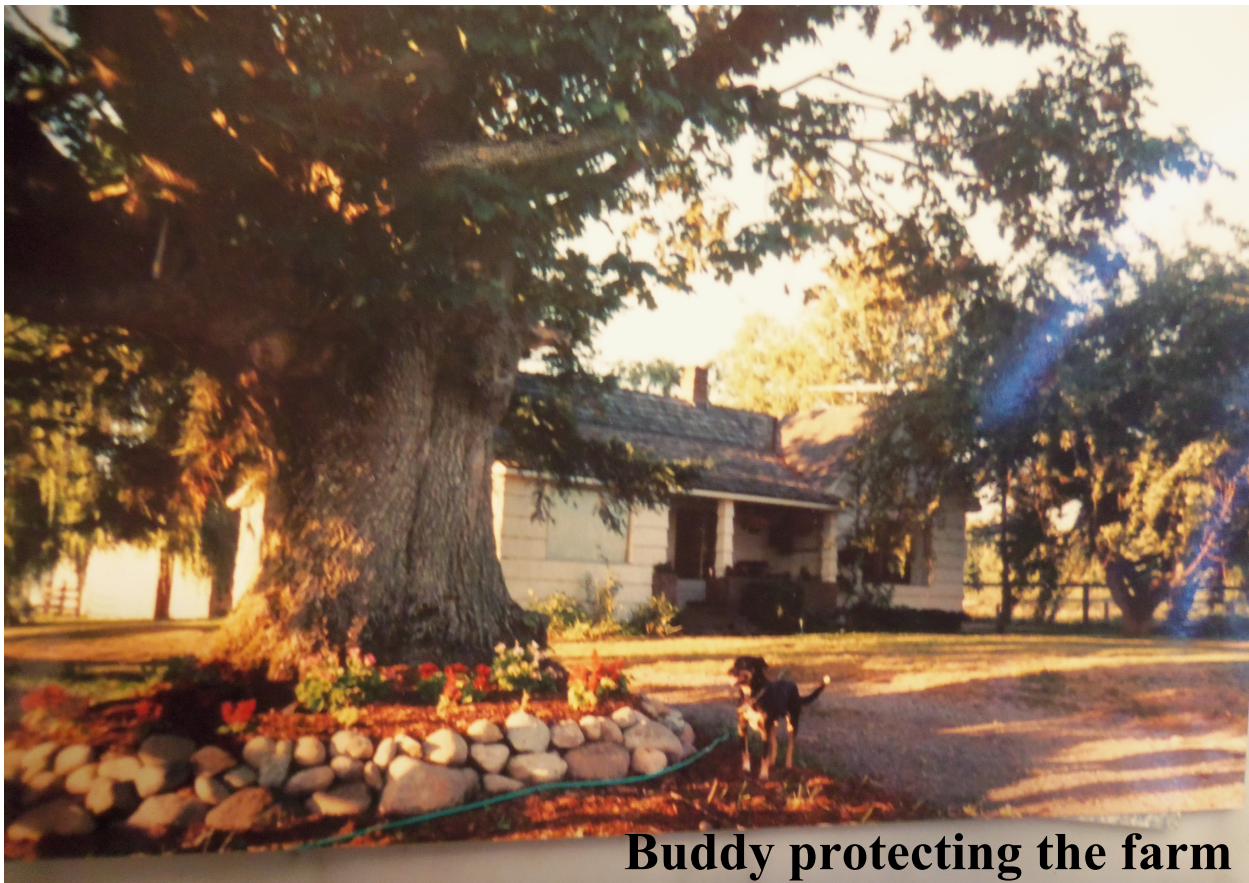
Although we had a little yippy terrier before we got into horses in a big way, dogs came to take on a larger role in our farm and family life. Before Kay insisted on training our horses, a trainer we had engaged for our first foals of racing age had an Australian shepherd that we liked, and so we got a half Australian shepherd mix called Sheila that was a family favorite. Sheila was perhaps the best-behaved dog we ever had, but she had absolutely no inclination toward the horses. She seemed to realize that they were big, dangerous, and none of her business.



Life before kids and horses

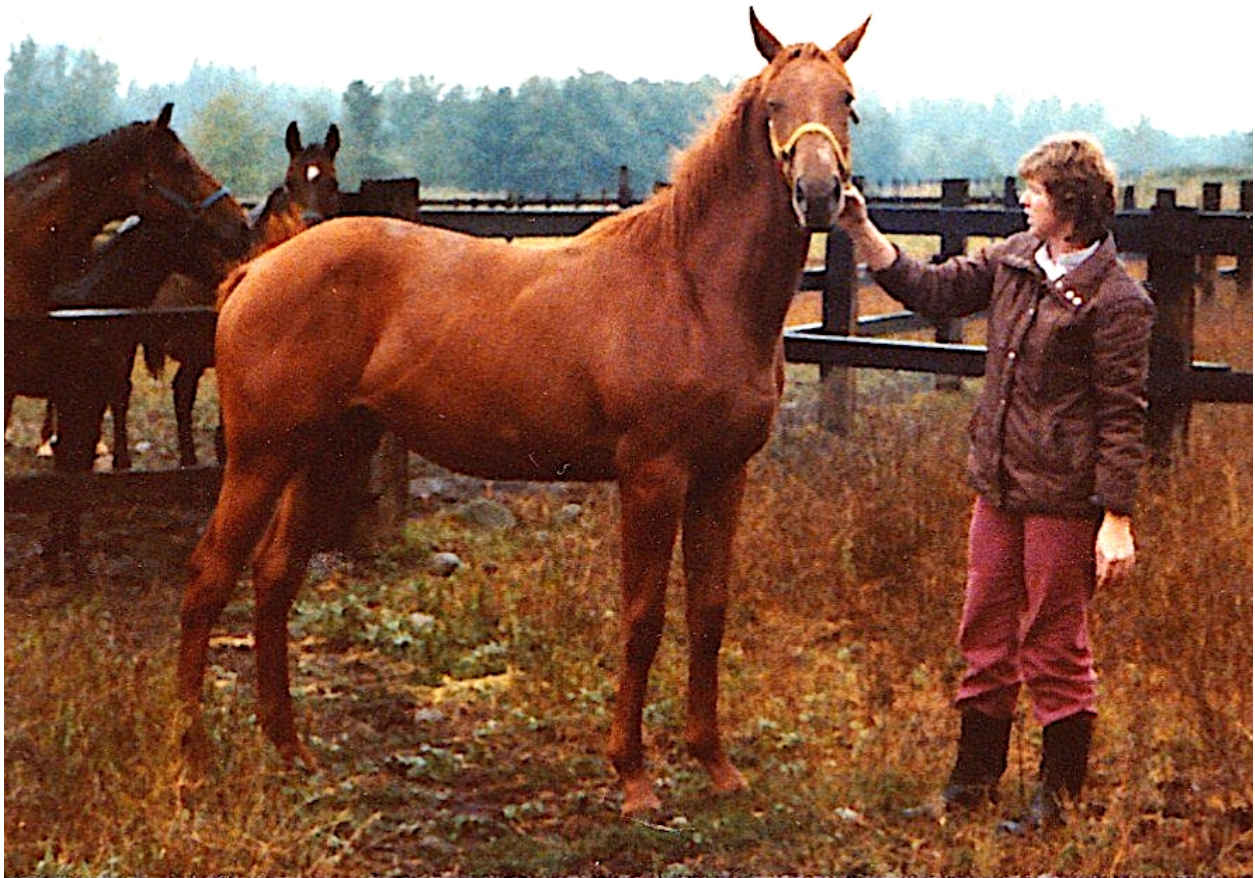


Somewhere along the line in our busy lives which led up to fifty some horses on our farm and Kay with sixty or so in training, Buddy came along. He found us rather than the other way around. He was young and chewed on our water hoses which is anathema on a horse farm. I'd fix a hose in one place and the next day it would be spraying us from another angle. It was exasperating, and Buddy – who we assumed belonged to the neighboring house behind our farm was being punished for bad behavior which, if he had been mine would probably been the end of the road for him. One day the neighbor stopped by for a chat – probably to negotiate the fence between us. I mentioned his dog to which he informed me that he knew nothing of a dog. They had none. But by then Buddy was an integral part of the family even if he had caused problems in the barn; he was a quick learner, and the hoses were never a problem again. But he remained an 'outside dog' for several years; even in cold weather he would find a place to spend his nights in our garage in a discarded overstuffed chair.



Buddy protecting the farm

Our farm was never built to accommodate the number of horses or number of incompatible categories of horses that we had on the farm. We had enlarged our barns, but the fencing for stallions, mares with foals, weanlings, and yearling separated into colts and fillies, and horses resting or recuperating from the track required considerable openings and closings of gates into the various fields allocated to each category. In addition, during the summer months several of the fields did not have a separate accommodation of water. We had a field that was about four acres next to the barn where we pastured the mares with foals during the day. In that field we had a bathtub for a watering trough that we kept filled. All the other categories of horses had to go through that field to get to a gate to their assigned pasture. Mares with foals were let out last.



Every morning before going to work at Boeing in Kent, I would separately let out the horses to each category and let them go down to the water trough if they wanted more water before going out to their field. I would give each group of few minutes to drink and browse before rounding them up to head out to their field. It became a game for them, but a very annoying and time-consuming necessity for me. I'd have to walk up to the far end of the field and then work the horses back toward their gate. Then I'd close the gate, often with a foot of mud in and around the gate, and head back to the barn for the next bunch.

One morning When I came out to work the horses out of the pasture Buddy was down sitting by the bathtub waiting for a horse to finish drinking. Then as I came down to start working them toward their gate, Buddy ran out around the furthest horse and hurried it along, nipping at it so that it hurried and then he went after the next furthest, etc. I was amazed. From then on, that was the new routine. I would let the horses out, then after a while I would go out to see whether they were ready to go on out to their field. I'd look down to the bathtub and if there were no more drinkers I'd yell, "Get 'em out Buddy," and I'd head down to the gate to close it after he had them all out.

It was a dangerous job; the horses didn't like the procedure and Buddy had to learn which horses chased him to trample him and which ones tried to kick him. He figured them all out; he'd nip at the noses of the ones that wanted to chase him and run from the side at the ones that tried to kick him. Then he'd leap past their rear end, grabbing the tail on the way by with the horse kicking at him and missing. With extreme skill he trained them to comply with the rules.



We never got a good photo of Buddy but he was pals with everyone on the farm.

But he was a dog after all and every six months or so he would go on what we called a 'French weekend' when some bitch was in heat within a mile or so radius of the farm. Even on these occasions when he was gone all day, he would show up on time to do his job first thing in the morning; he never missed... well, almost never.

It was in one of the extremely cold spells in February after horse trainers had been allowed to bring in their horses to Longacres in Renton. Kay had a barnful at the track to train, which she did in the early morning because they close the track for training at 10:00 AM sharp. I was working at Boeing in Kent. Buddy hadn't shown up to help for a few days, aggravating my morning considerably. We decided we should check whether the animal control people had picked him up and taken him down to the shelter right across Orilla Road from the building I was working in at the time.

I made a point of going over there to find out whether they had picked Buddy up. They showed me where they kept all the dogs kenneled and I did the rounds but no Buddy. I asked at the front desk about their schedule for euthanizing dogs and whether there would be a record of dogs they had picked up. She handed me their log and I began looking through it for the days Buddy had been missing. I found a report of a dog matching Buddy's description picked up about a mile from our farm. But as 'disposition' it read, "Escaped". Escaped? Are you kidding? The animal control vehicles were made of steel with about ten or twelve separate compartments on each side. A dog could not escape if he had been put in one of those. So, I went up to the lady in charge and asked what that particular entry meant.

I think she thought I was reading challenged or something because she looked at me like I was stupid. "It means he escaped," she said.

"How does a dog escape from a steel container on one of those trucks," I asked.

"I don't know," she responded uninterested in my dilemma. "Maybe he got loose when they took him out of the truck."

I looked at the chain link fence around the facility and asked, "How would he escape from this fence?"

"Maybe they didn't close the gate."

So... there's snow on the ground and the temperature's down near zero and Buddy is roaming around the Kent valley. You hear of dogs finding their way home against incredible odds, but 25 miles across freeways? It seemed like a long shot.

Kay and I discussed our options. My mornings were pretty hectic with mares foaling at night and Buddy not there to help in the morning getting the horses out, so we decided that every day or so Kay should stop by the animal control facility on her way home from the track to check whether they had picked up Buddy yet. But... we had never licensed Buddy; it seemed a bit citified for horse farmers from Enumclaw with a stray dog. Anyway, the rules were that if your dog is not licensed and you pick it up at the facility you must pay a fine in addition to purchasing a license in order to get your dog out of detention. So... I tell Kay, if you find Buddy there, just tell them that you'd like to rescue that dog. Don't tell them that he's ours.

One day Kay stops by the facility and has a look at all the dogs and there's Buddy and needless to say, he is thrilled to see a familiar face. So Kay goes to the office and tells the lady that she would like one of the dogs. She identifies which dog, and the lady says, "You'll have to wait for two days before you can pick him up."

Kay says, "I would like to take him home now."

The lady says, "Well, what if it was your dog, wouldn't you want us to wait so you could pick up your dog?"

Kay playing her role as Kay Vaughan says, “I think he *is* my dog...”

Oh oh! The lady was so mad she just walked off and got another person to process Kay’s fine and the licensing fee.

Buddy got into the familiar crew cab pickup heading for home and all the way home he is moaning, howling, and wailing to Kay about what an awful time he’s had. When I got home later, he continued explaining to me just how awful life can be and Kay is complaining about my dumb idea to avoid the penalty. He got kennel cough as a part of the experience and we had to get him over that. But he became a house dog from then on along with the rest of the farm workers.

When we retired and left the farm, Buddy came with us.



Just yesterday Kay read me something off of the internet to the effect that rich people have expensive labels on their clothes, but happy people have dog hair.