

Daniel's Boon

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

Our son Grady Daniel Partin was going to have his eighteenth birthday 26 January 1996. He had seen an advertisement on television with a beautiful Siberian husky as one of the characters, so he announced to his dad and me that that was what he wanted for his birthday. He was a senior in high school and sacked groceries at the Monteagle Piggly Wiggly for extra money. One night after work, he came home excited about finding a picture of a litter of Siberian huskies for sale on a bulletin board at the store. He had a phone number where the owners could be reached in Pelham and insisted that we make the call to inquire about the litter.

Although I had a dog that I dearly loved when I was a teenager, and my husband had had many dogs throughout our marriage, I was not at this point in my life, a dog lover. We lived in deep woods with many wild creatures visiting us every day. A dog would cause these animals that I had grown to love, to move on to another area. A dog would bark all night at the wildlife and keep me awake. I could not, I would not, tolerate a “night barker.” A dog cost money—lots of it. Little puppies are nuisances; nothing is off limits to their destructive behavior. No, no, no, I did not want a dog on the place. I meant it!! I was the authority in our house!

His dad made the call, and sure enough, they had two puppies left. Ah, shucks!! I cringed. The little male puppy would cost us \$250.00. We weren't sure that we could or should spend that kind of money for a dog, but Daniel agreed to pay one hundred dollars of his own money on his own birthday gift—unbelievable, he really, really wanted that dog! As he and his dad were preparing to leave for the trip to Pelham (*just to look at the puppies*), I was running around them spitting out phrases to Daniel like, “If you get that dog, *you'll* be responsible for feeding him and keeping water out for him at all times. *You'll* be the one to clean up his messes. *You'll* be the one who will have to give him baths. And on and on I went.” Why can't I just keep my mouth shut? I might as well have been talking to a brick wall; all Daniel had on his mind was getting that puppy.

While they were gone, I kept thinking that maybe Grady Ward would find something wrong with the puppy, or just perhaps, Daniel would realize what spending a hundred dollars of his own money really meant. I wanted so badly for them to come back without a puppy, but I never was a very lucky person. Soon the truck pulled back into the drive, and as I suspected, there he was—a soft, white, silver and black ball of fur with big, light blue eyes—adorable, simply adorable. I knew they would come back with “*something*,” one way or the other, even if it only had three legs or one eye—I just knew. Daniel couldn't wait to thrust the round ball of fur into my arms. What was

wrong with me? Why was I so set against having a puppy around the house? Who couldn't love that soft, fuzzy, cuddly, little fellow? Hitler maybe, but the more I watched Daniel with his puppy the more that round "ball of fur" grew on me. However, deep, deep down inside me, there was this strange, sickening feeling.

Daniel's room at the time was a large, unfinished room in our basement. He wanted it to stay open and available for skateboarding, for hanging dream catchers from the ceiling, for hiding all those things teenagers don't want snooping mothers to find, and now for housing his new puppy. There was no way that the puppy could stay outside while he was small enough to be carried off by the larger wild animals lurking in the Fiery Gizzard Gulf. During the nights, I had heard the growls and screams of all kinds of animals in that gulf. So it was agreed that there was plenty of room for Daniel and his new dog to abide together in the big basement room. A large covered foam pillow was placed near the heat for the puppy to sleep on; a large bowl of water was made available, and of course, a couple of toys (*an old shoe and a rubber ducky*) were scattered around for him to chew on instead of the furniture. An old-fashioned, loud-ticking alarm clock was wrapped in a blanket and placed on his pillow—that was to trick the little being into thinking it was his mother's heartbeat. Now what more could a puppy ask for? I went upstairs feeling good about the birthday gift. All would be well.

It was as though the *rest of my life* started the night the new puppy was bedded down on his cozy pillow with his alarm clock. When our three sons were babies, they chewed on teething rings, but they never tore them apart. In the course of a few days, "that puppy" had chewed on the electric blanket and its cord, deeming it unusable. (*I never did understand how he kept from being electrocuted.*) The foam rubber pillow was laying in tiny pieces all over the big room. (*We had a calf to die one time from eating a piece of foam rubber—but that puppy didn't.*) The comforter and bed skirt set were torn on all corners, and the rockers on the Bentwood rocker were deeply gnawed. Daniel's new dental retainers were beyond recognition, and the once highly polished concrete floor was littered with "poop and pee." The threads in the large braided rugs on the floor were pulled out making an undesirable design. The whole room took on a pleasant smell of Pinesol that was used (*by me*) daily to eliminate the smell of dog. I began to notice that the strong Pinesol was eating away at the nice finish on the concrete floor. Now let's see, in a few days "that dog" had run up a bill of destruction far above his cost. *And I was worried about the expense of having a dog!* Well, things had to get better, but I still had a tiny sick feeling deep in my gut.

One might ask at this point, "Didn't 'that dog' have a name?" Wouldn't one think that a boy would be so excited about naming his dog? This was no ordinary dog; he was a thoroughbred and needed to have a registered name. Daniel was always busy—going to school, going to work, going to meet his friends in town—going, going, going. "What's wrong with calling him 'Dog'?" he asked. Now let me get it straight thus far: *I* cleaned up "that dog's" messes, *I* paid for Daniel's new retainers, *I* put out the food and

water for “that Dog,” and now *I* must choose a name for him. What was going on here? I had heard about this same scenario playing out with other parents and their children concerning pets. Was I going to let this happen to me?

Checking into the registration, I found I needed to send a name and thirty dollars. The cost of Daniel’s birthday gift was growing: \$250 for the pup, about \$250 damages to Daniel’s room plus the cost of new retainers (*we won’t even go there*), dog food, shampoos, brushes for his long fur, and now \$30 for registration. Reasoning that if I ever wanted to part with “that dog,” he would be worth more if he were registered, or “Heaven forbid,” if we wanted more just like him, we could get rich raising little Siberian huskies—couldn’t we? So I thought, “I can do this one more thing for Daniel; soon, he will step right in there and take on his responsibilities toward his gift.”

Naming a dog, a special dog, isn’t easy. Fido, Sport, Rin-Tin-Tin or Spot just didn’t seem to fit “that dog.” I studied his face and his actions; deep inside that little creature was a loving soul. Daniel was so excited about his new friend. He was a blessing to our son. As they slept beside each other in front of the fire, I could see the ties that bound them together. His chosen name should interpret the “oneness” of a young man and his dog. Almost instantly the name came to me, “Daniel’s Boon!” I liked that, “Daniel’s Blessing!” With Daniel’s permission, *I* filled out the papers; *I* wrote the check; and *I* registered him as “Daniel’s Boon.” It was a long wait until the name came back as registered. He no longer was to be called “that dog;” we would call him “Boon” for short. I just knew that Daniel Boone of old Kentucky would have been proud of the little pup, or even “Daniel in the Lions’ Den,” who had his own blessing in the form of salvation from the jaws of death, would have loved the name. That’s what I would do; if Boon ever disappointed me, I would quickly think of those two great men of old and then count to ten, and things would get better.



Boon came into our lives already wormed and readied with baby shots, and that saved us money. You know, those vet bills can be whoppers at times. It wasn't long though until he needed his follow-up shots. Daniel took charge of taking his friend to the vet and paying for it. What a wonderful sight! Man and his dog flying down the road in a red Toyota Truck—hair and fur blowing in the wind. They made wonderful companions. Earlier, Grady Ward had taken Boon to visit Dr. Kirk in Tracy City. During the office visit, the doctor told him that Siberian huskies are pretty dogs, but they wander everywhere. He said that they would not stay home. Admittedly, we were concerned after spending so much money as Daniel grew closer to him, and then facing the possibility that he might leave on an adventure. However, Boon had a loving family and lived on a farm with all kinds of animals at the time, so he would have no reason to wander. Isn't there a saying, "You had a good home, and you left it!" Boon would never leave this farm.

From the beginning, every morning while Boon was a small puppy, I would give him a small bowl of milk. He knew exactly where the microwave was on the kitchen counter, so he would run up to it and do his puppy growls while it warmed. He could hardly sit still until he heard the bell on the oven. I figured that the warm milk would give him a snug feeling while he was still a baby. As he grew into a larger puppy, he could no longer stay in the house, it was too hot for all his fur. By that time, he was too large for a coyote to get him easily, so he moved outside to a waiting doghouse, a special one from Lowe's, which he never used. Just like a child I had spoiled him with the milk, so whoever went out the front door first in the mornings was assured of being charged by Boon trying to get to the microwave. After he lapped up his milk, he would then make a wild dash around a corner in the living room and jump right up into a large recliner. It did not matter if someone was sitting in it or not, that was just part of his routine. After hugs and petting, we opened the door and out he went into the great wide world of adventure.

And an adventure it was! (*Ma Coulson, my senior English teacher, would turn over in her grave if she knew I started a paragraph, or for that matter a sentence with the word "and."*) There was no end to the wonderful surprises that awaited him out there on the range. There were approximately sixty acres of land for him to romp on—not just any old piece of land either. There were toys all over the place just for his entertainment—ponds in which he could cool off, pastures to dig in for gophers, woods to play hide 'n seek with squirrels, a fast moving creek through which he could romp, wild animals galore to chase, birds to jump and scatter, trails to run on, and people going and coming all the time. What more could a dog want in his life? That doctor had to be wrong about this husky. Boon was in Paradise! Why would he ever want to leave?

One morning Boon did not show up for his bowl of milk; I knew immediately that something was wrong. I began driving around the neighborhood to see if I could find

him. Huskies are not barkers, so he probably would not have barked even if he had heard the truck. When I could not find him, I came home and called all the neighbors hoping someone had seen him. Mrs. Susie Dykes told me this story. Mr. Allen Hargis had parked his truck on the side of Partins' Farm Road to check to his cattle that were in a field near us. When he came back to his truck, he found a huge dog sitting up in the passenger side of his truck as though he were waiting for a ride to "somewhere." Mr. Hargis had no idea whose dog it was, so he took him to Lonnie Dykes' house and left him there. Lonnie didn't need a dog, so he passed him on to one of his sons. Upon hearing this from Susie, I jumped into my truck and took off to the old Andy Dykes' home, hoping to retrieve Boon. Boy, was I mad at that dog—(*one, two...*), but I was also worried that he may have been given to someone else who may have taken him to a far country.

When I drove up to the house, I saw nothing of Boon. I knocked on the front door, but no one was home. I had never met these people and was a little nervous about going around to the back of the house to search for the Dykes family or Boon, whichever one might be there. As I rounded the corner of the house, there the wanderer was, chained to a big tree. When he saw me, he began to cry and talk to me liked he did every morning at the microwave. Without any hesitation, I released him and put him in the front seat of the truck. I made my get away before anyone came home. I hoped Boon had learned a lesson from this episode; I know I had.

Before Boon became a part of our family, Mr. Hargis kept cows in the Doug Partin fields across Partin Farm Road from us. Many times as I left home or I came home, a young rogue, red heifer was on our side of the road just exploring all possibilities of greener grasses and other wonderments. I often ran her back into her field, but the fences were in bad condition, so she would not stay. I was so aggravated with her, and one day I stopped and told Mr. Hargis that if that cow got into my garden, he was going to see one very unhappy lady. Grady Ward was not happy with me for saying that, and later on, I was not happy with me for saying it.

For some time we had noticed some stray dogs chasing Mr. Hargis' cattle and biting at their hooves. We yelled at them and tried to run them off. Then Boon discovered the cows and began playing with them. The cows were not running from him, but actually seemed to be teasing him, so I thought nothing of it. One day Mr. Hargis drove up in our drive, and I stepped out onto the porch to talk with him. He asked me if I remembered scolding him about his rogue cow to which I answered, "Yes." He then put me in my place when he began to tell me that my dog had been chasing his cows. He did say that he didn't think my dog was trying to hurt the cows, but nevertheless, he wanted me to keep him at home. I told him that he was exactly right and that my dog had no right to be in his pastures bothering his cows, and I would do something about it—(*one, two, three...*). Then he continued the conversation by saying that he had just seen several stray dogs getting Boon by the throat and downing him over and over. He

asked me if Boon had come home. I told him that he would be under the front porch I was standing on if he was home. Sure enough, I bent down to look in the dry leaves under the porch, and there he lay with blood all over him. I called him out, but he appeared too down to walk, so I pulled him out. It looked as though most of the blood was coming from the throat area. I thanked Mr. Hargis for telling me and told him I would clean him up and check to see if he needed a vet.

It was very hard to get through the fur to his skin. He had some wounds, but they had ceased to bleed, so I proceeded to wash his fur with warm water and cleanse his wounds with peroxide. I used neo-sporin to help heal the wounds. He crawled back under the porch onto the leaves and stayed there a couple of days. I placed food and water near him. I hoped once again that he had learned his lesson. I had learned a good lesson in dealing with neighbors, so why couldn't he learn also. Does anyone reading this story wonder where Daniel was each time Boon got into trouble? Why am I the one who always seemed to be available to get the little mutt out of trouble?

By the time Boon was three months old, he was a huge dog; surely he couldn't grow much more. He would make his daily visits to our son Curt's house. Sometimes he would stay all day—just lying around staying out of trouble, well almost. There was the time he ran through Curt's screen door completely destroying the screen; he had previously practiced for that little trick. If Grady Ward and I didn't stand in front of our screen door, he would come running down the hill and never stop until the screen was ripped open and he was inside, either at the microwave or in the recliner. We would mend the screen as best we could. One day we weren't able to stop him, and the screen was completely torn asunder. It took a long time to take the old screen out and stretch a new one into place. With the help of one of Daniel's friends the new door was hung. As we stood back admiring what a good job had been done, from out of nowhere, Boon charged the door—(*one, two, three, four...*). It stayed torn up for years.

One of Boon's favorite playthings was dirty socks. Yes, I agree; that is gross! But for whatever reason, he liked to drag out the dirty clothes to get to the socks. On this particular morning, I received a phone call from Nancy (Gross) Parmley who lived about a quarter mile down the road from us. She said, "Jackie, Boon came for a visit, and Meagan was standing with the door open (*thank goodness for that*) talking with him when he charged into the house and up the stairs; he found dirty socks and was playing with them. We can't get him to go back outside." I told her that I'd be there as quickly as possible. Maybe Dr. Kirk did know what he was talking about. Maybe huskies did like to wander—Boon did! I apologized to her and loaded him into my little truck fussing at him all the time—(*one, two, three, four, five...*). I noticed on the way home that Boon was filling up more of the little truck seat each time I gathered him home. He took up much more room than I did, and I am not little.

Boon often tried to follow Grady Ward as he went off to work, but he always stopped the truck, got out and yelled, “Go home, Boon,” just as loudly as he could. He thought that that was working until one day he saw Boon running parallel to the road through the pastures as the truck went down the road. Boon had decided to stay under cover, but not to stay at home. So now we were certain that he had found the main highway, and this frightened us. As beautiful as he was, and as innocent as a pup is, he would be “dog-napped” in no time.

Daryl Partin lived just to the right where Partin Farm Road meets the main highway. He called me one morning. He was having a problem with Boon. My heart sank. What could he be into now? This really bordered on *wandering*! It seemed that Boon was playing too rough with Daryl’s cat, and he feared that the cat might get hurt. I told him to take a broom to him and hit him to make him go home. Hitting Boon meant nothing—with all the fur he had, he couldn’t feel any pain, but maybe he would get the idea that the one holding the broom didn’t want him around any more. Daryl said that he had hit him and tried to make him leave. I apologized to him and made the trip up the road to get the great wanderer—(*one, two, three, four, five, six...*). Boy, my truck seat was really getting full! Was he the one gaining weight or was it I?

One day I was relaxing in a swing on our front porch when I heard a car coming across the field. When it got close enough, I noticed that Boon was sitting in the front seat on the passenger side, and Sally (Parmley) Brown was the driver. The dog looked as if he was the President of the United States. He sat up high in the seat and held his head high as if to say, “I’ve got my own chauffeur!” The story goes something like this: Sally was coming down Partins’ Farm Road when she noticed that one of Grady Ward’s mules was outside the fence. She pulled her car into the entrance of our long drive and got out to shoo the mule back into our field. She had left the car door opened, so when she returned to the car, there sat Boon in the front seat bigger than life! She decided to give him a ride home—thus, the scene now before me. I apologized to her for Boon’s having been on her upholstered car seat—(*one, two, three, four, five, six, seven...*). She just laughed and said that she was happy to accommodate him.

Boon was spending more and more time away from home. Maybe he was wandering! On one occasion, Grady Ward and our son Curt had pulled in at the barn to get something for a landscaping job when they noticed that Curt’s wife Sherry was coming down the road from her house toward the barn on her daughter’s bicycle. The Church brothers, Billy Joe and Jerry were standing there with them having a talk session. Just as soon as Sherry got close enough for Grady Ward to hear her, she blurted out, “Jackie called and said that Boon was at the beer joint! She wants you to go get him.” Immediately, Grady Ward tried to explain to Billy Joe and Jerry that Boon was a dog. It wasn’t enough that Boon worried me constantly with his shenanigans, but now he had taken up “drinking.” Anyone who knows me well, knows that I “hate” anything that has to do with alcoholic beverages. I hate the idea of social drinking; I

hate the idea of “Tubby’s” in old Montevallo; I hate Super Bowl commercials about alcohol; I hate beer cans, beer signs and my hands shake when I use cooking sherry in a recipe. And now my son’s dog has taken up drinking at the neighborhood beer joint! I could hardly get my fingers to dial the beer joint’s phone number, but when someone answered I politely asked that they not give him food or drink in hopes that he would stay away from the place. They assured me that he was given an occasional piece of pizza, but they would try to ignore him from then on—(*one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight...*).

Even though I gave Boon the same talk that I gave our three sons, “You’ll not put your feet under my table as long as you are living that way,” he kept right on laying out at the beer joint. Oft times on my way to and from work, I passed the joint and saw Boon on the doorstep. It was a wonder that someone had not already stolen him, or that he had not gotten into some drunk’s car and been taken to another world. He did manage to make his way home at nights, but any old drunk could do that. I knew it was only a matter of time until he would be struck by a car on the highway, or someone stole him, or even worse, he found out where I worked at Tracy City Elementary School. I knew that I would be in trouble if he found me there.

This particular day at Tracy City Elementary School we were hearing rumblings of several parents complaining that the faculty would not let the children have water to drink. When dealing with hundreds of parents and students, there will inevitably be something about which to complain. Carol Shrum and I were on duty in the 7th and 8th grade pod, monitoring as we did every day, all day long. The students were in transit from one class to the next. Because of an overflow, Mr. Ken Driver’s classroom had to have classes out in one of the portables. We could see the students coming from the outside room to the glass door through which they would enter into the main pod area. Mr. Driver came in talking loudly, “Whose big dog is that? What in the world has that dog got on his fur? He stinks to high Heaven!!!” The students, all at one time, were trying to get through the single, glass door, but the ones in front were closing the door to keep the big dog and his odor out! Those left outside the door were yelling, “Let us in! Let us in! He stinks!”

I could hear and see all the commotion, but it had not yet registered in my head as to what exactly was causing the trouble. When I finally keyed in on the problem, I looked out through the classroom toward the exit door, and there stood Boon with his face pressed to the glass—(*one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine...*). Children were running out of all the portables. Boon was running back and forth, in and out of the classrooms. He thought they were playing with him when actually his body odor was running everyone in and then out. I could hear the loud cries, “Whose dog is that?” I was sick to my stomach. Just as I was trying to get through the chaos to get to Boon, an office aide came to me and said, “Miss Jackie, Channel 9 News cameras are

unloading at the front of the building. We thought you might need to let everyone know; I could have thrown up!

Whether the five hundred students could or could not have water to drink brought the television cameras to the school, but if I didn't do some quick leg work, they were going to get a bigger story headline, "**Contaminated Siberian Husky Causes Mayhem at Tracy City Elementary School!**" I managed to get out the door without letting Boon charge passed me into the main building. He had no collar, so I had no way to manage him without grabbing both hands full of his fur and letting him drag me down the sidewalk that ran parallel to the portables. By this time, he was a big, big dog. There is no way to describe the terrible stench that I had just buried in my hands. Ideas filled my head—"Where are the television cameras? How could I possibly load Boon into my new little truck? What will I do with him when I get home? My principal will not know where I am." On and on my brain filled with worries and anxiety. With not too many more tugs, I could have dragged him across the street, quickly opened the door on the beer joint and kicked him inside. They would never have noticed the stench as it mingled with smells from the beer, cigarettes and no telling what else. After all, he loved them, and they seemed to adore him. We'd just see how deep that love ran!

As we near the end of the school building, I held onto Boon tightly while I peered around the building looking for the Channel 9 crew with their cameras. I saw the cameraman go toward the front door and gave him a few minutes to clear the huge glass panels at the front of the building. Then I held on for dear life as Boon dragged me toward my truck, which was parked right in front of the school. He knew exactly where he was going. I hated so badly to put him in the upholstered seat in the cab, but he would not have stayed in the bed of the truck. "In you go, you sorry good-for-nothing mutt!" I crawled into the "depth of stench" for the trip home. A tremendous crisis had been averted!

I headed for home when I suddenly realized that I had nowhere to put him where he would not come back to school. My mother in Monteagle had a dog and kept dogs for others, so maybe I could "store" him in her yard for a few hours. She had a wonderful chain linked fence around the area. When I got there, she was not home, and there were visiting dogs in her yard and house. Leaving Boon in the truck cab, I set about putting each dog out of the yard into separate rooms of my mother's house just in case they were not compatible neighbors with those inside the house. Then I put Boon inside my mother's yard. As I drove off toward home, anxiety struck again. What if my mother lets Boon out the gate when she drives in from her trip? What if Boon charges her door and gets inside her house? What if she never speaks to me again?

Well, I had to get back to work. No doubt about it, I was AWOL, but I could not go back without taking a shower, washing my hair and changing clothes. Then there was the matter of how to sit in my truck seat without getting dirty again while I drove back

to work. I ran to my front door at home and began to shed my clothing from the porch to the bathroom. When I was younger, I was a neat housekeeper and would never have done such a thing, but I was in a terrible hurry. I even threw my wristwatch down on the floor. After showering, covering my body with cologne and dressing in clean clothes and shoes, I grabbed the Lysol spray and a couple of blankets and ran to my truck. I sprayed till the can was emptied; I covered the seat completely with the blankets; then I drove back to work. Thankfully the cameras had left; everything was back to normal.

I had not been back to work long when I was paged to the office. My mother had called and wanted to know, “What in the world has Boon been wallowing in?” I told her that I didn’t know, but as soon as school was out, I would come and get him. Then another phone call came; this time it was from Grady Ward. “Jackie, are you alright? I was frightened when I found your things scattered from the porch to the bathroom. I knew you would never leave your house looking that way.” It is so nice to be loved and understood!

Meanwhile that same day, I began talking to school employees about trying to find someone who might want Boon for a pet—(*one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten*). Once he had found out where I worked, I could no longer keep him. Within in minutes a phone call was made, and Boon had a new home. I warned the young man who wanted him to bring an old vehicle to pick up his new ward. I met him at my mother’s house, gave him “Daniel’s Boon” and his papers, and off the two went. I was sad, but relieved. I never asked about his whereabouts or his behavior. I expected any day to see him on my doorstep, but never did. Daniel said loudly, “**Mama!** You gave *my* dog away. I could have sold him and got my money back!” (*One, two, three...*)

Dr. Kirk was right when he said, “These dogs are beautiful, but they never stay home.”