

Learning to Love Dogs  
By Marilyn Reeves

During the years I was growing up, I was terrified of dogs. Big dogs, little dogs, growly dogs, yappy dogs – even fairly large puppies – they all scared me. Maybe it's because we never had a dog. I usually walked to school and always dreaded passing certain houses where the resident dogs would come out and bark at me. They didn't bite me, but – large or small – I was afraid of them. Back in those days, there were no leash laws in Salida, and dogs hadn't yet evolved out of their instinct to chase anything that moved. The only time I was ever bitten was by a small dog who came out and yapped at me as I was pedaling my bicycle past his house. I very naively kicked my foot out at the menacing critter, who returned the favor by biting me on the ankle, reinforcing my fear of dogs.

But as time went by I got to know a few of my friends' dogs, and eventually learned that all dogs weren't vicious. In fact, some of them were even quite friendly. So gradually, over time, I began to lose my fear of dogs, with a few exceptions: Rottweilers, Dobermans, Chow dogs, and any kind of Bull dog – especially Pit Bulls! Those I continue to fear to this day.

The first time I ever owned a dog was the puppy we got when we were living in Dallas. My son Tom was eleven and had waited all his life for a dog, so when my then husband Gil's co-worker's mama dog had a litter of puppies, Tommy picked out a little white dog that looked to be a cross between a Cocker Spaniel and a Spitz. She was a sweet, cuddly little thing, with long, curly white fur, floppy tan ears, and a feathery tail. We called her 'Cindy' – short for Cinderella. I used to love to rub my face in her fur and tell her all my secrets. And after my son left home, she became *my* dog. Cindy lived for fourteen years.

I've always loved long-haired animals. If I were younger and lived on a farm, I would even consider getting a larger dog like a Shepherd. Shepherds are beautiful dogs, highly intelligent and energetic. And with their long fur, they look so cuddly. I can picture myself burying my face in one's soft-looking coat and telling him all my secrets.

I think the cutest little dogs are probably Yorkies. There's one I see outside my window trotting along behind its owner that is so adorable, I'd like to dognap the little thing! But I won't. Not just because the owner might object, but at this time in my life, I really don't want another dog. I haven't got the energy to take proper care of one.

But, except for the big menacing ones, and the little ones who yap-yap-yap and won't shut up, I'm happy to say that I have learned to love dogs, after all.