



Puppy Love

by LouAnn Catanoso

My love of dogs goes back as far as I can remember. Judy, our families first pet, followed my little brothers home from Margaret Mace School one day in the mid sixties. My dad reported it to the North Wildwood Police, but no one ever claimed her, so he said we could keep her. My little brothers Billy and Joe named her, but she became "my best friend". Judy was very protective of all of us, and always maintained her "wild streak". After about one year she presented us with six beautiful little puppies.

My older brother, Chuck, brought our next dog home. He was a very handsome black Great Dane puppy. He was very gentle, even though he grew to be six feet tall when standing on his hind legs. He enjoyed sitting on our couch like a human being.

Next came Lindy. Lindy was an Irish Wolfhound, and also grew to be a very large dog. Right around the same time that we got Lindy, I decided to get Steven. Steven was a little yellow colored mixed breed, that I bought at a pet shop on a whim for twenty six dollars. I can still hear my mother screaming at him when he would torment Lindy, and she would "gallop" through the house chasing the little devil. The two dogs grew to love each other in no time.

My friend Nina and I decided to get our own apartment when Steven was about six months old. I was taking a medical assistant course which took me out of the house at least eight hours every day. Steven could not get used to being alone. I would come home and literally find his paw prints on the ceiling. I was afraid for his safety, and hated leaving him alone so much. My cousin ran an orphanage in Philadelphia, and told me that they were looking for a pet for the children. I cried myself to sleep every night for two weeks after Steven was gone. But, Steven went on to have a wonderful life at the orphanage. Sister Damien, who lived and worked at the orphanage, adopted him as her own. The children loved him, and he had the run of the entire place, and the neighborhood also. He also found a steady girlfriend in the neighborhood, and they had their share of "babies" over the years.

Molly was our Chinese Sharpei, with a face and a body that only a mother could love. She came to us as a baby, wrinkly and stinky, and snorting like a pig. She was very affectionate and even the mailman loved her. The "Puppy" came along while Molly was still with us; hence the name "Puppy". Puppy grew to be a monster; but never forgot that Molly came first, and that she was the boss.

Lilly is my baby. Eleven years ago I went out one night to buy a lamp post for my front yard. I got the lamp post, and I also got a puppy at the pet shop that was close by. She looked like a little white fox sitting in her box on the floor in the middle of the shop. She was very quiet (not your typical puppy) and she almost seemed depressed. It took her three weeks to start to trust me. To this day she is still very timid around most people; but to me, she is perfect. Her nickname is "Squirrelly" and I love her very much.

When you are a small child your pet will lay next to you in bed at night, and keep a watchful eye on those scary shadows on the walls and ceiling while you sleep. And when your sixteen



Judy & her puppies 1967



Brutus & brother Joe 1969



LouAnn & Steven 1976



Daughter Lauren, Molly & niece, Amber 1985



Nephew Mario & Lilly 2008

and your first love breaks your heart, your pets are there for you to cry on. They also prove to be good company when your child grows up and goes off to college. They know when your sick, and they stay close by without asking for anything from you in return. And, they remain loyal to the end of their days.

My wish for everyone, is that they experience this kind of unconditional love at least once in their lifetime.

Authors note: On October 25th 2009 I celebrated ten years "cancer free". I would like to dedicate this little hearted story to all those less fortunate than me. I wish speedy recoveries, positive thinking, and support from friends and family for them.