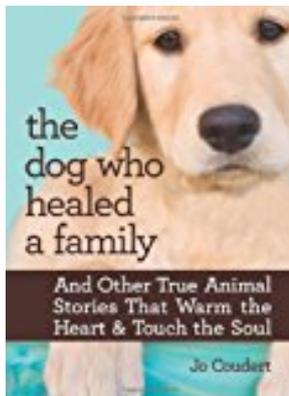


[PDF] The Dog Who Healed A Family: And Other True Animal Stories That Warm The Heart & Touch The Soul

Jo Coudert - pdf download free book



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Description:

From **Publishers Weekly** Coudert (Seven Cats and the Art of Living) offers an uplifting collection of true animal tales featuring ducks, geese, deer, and dogs who bring healing and joy to those

around them. She introduces us to Snoopy, a 17-year-old dachshund/beagle mix whose family can't afford to transport her from Wyoming to their new home in Indiana. Through the efforts of several animal lovers, Snoopy rides the puppy express and is happily returned to her family. The title story describes a generous family who adopts three siblings haunted by their troubled history and incapable of connecting emotionally with their new parents. Enter Shaneen, a puppy with a preternatural ability to sense what the children need and how to reach them. We also meet Lord Bacon, a remarkable miniature pig, who helps his owner overcome agoraphobia, as well as Dirty Annie and Philip, wild ducks who invade a yard to snack on raspberries and end up charming the yard owner. These touching and engaging vignettes will make animal lovers out of us all. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Curled nose to tail, the little dog was drowsing in Nancy Topp's lap as the truck rolled along the interstate. Suddenly Nancy felt her stiffen into alertness. "What's the matter, old girl?" Nancy asked. At seventeen, Snoopy had a bit of a heart condition and some kidney problems, and the family was concerned about her.

Struggling to her feet, the dog stared straight ahead. She was a small dog, with a dachshund body but a beagle head, and she almost seemed to be pointing. Nancy followed the dog's intent gaze, and then she saw it, too. A wisp of smoke was curling out of a crack in the dashboard. "Joe!" she shouted at her husband at the wheel. "Joe, the engine's on fire!"

Within seconds the cab of the ancient truck was seething with smoke. Nancy and Joe and their two children—Jodi, twelve, and Matthew, fifteen—leaped to the shoulder of the road and ran. When they were well clear, they turned and waited for the explosion that would blow everything they owned sky-high. Instead, the engine coughed its way into silence, gave a last convulsive shudder and died.

Joe was the first to speak. "Snoopy," he said to the little brown and white dog, "you may not hear or see so good, but there's nothing wrong with your nose."

"Now if you could just tell us how we're going to get home," Matthew joked. Except it wasn't much of a joke. Here they were, fifteen hundred miles from home, stranded on a highway in Wyoming, with the truck clearly beyond even Joe's gift for repairs. The little dog, peering with cataract-dimmed eyes around the circle of faces, seemed to reflect their anxiety.

The Topps were on the road because five months earlier a nephew had told Joe there was work to be had in the Napa Valley and Joe and Nancy decided to take a gamble on moving out there. Breaking up their home in Fort Wayne, Indiana, they packed up the kids and Snoopy and set out for California. But once there, the warehousing job Joe hoped for did not materialize, Nancy and the kids were sharply homesick and their funds melted away. Now it was January and, the gamble lost, they were on their way back home to Fort Wayne.

The truck had gotten them as far as Rock Springs, Wyoming, but now there was nothing to do but sell it to a junk dealer for \$25 and hitch a ride to the bus station. Two pieces of bad news greeted them there. Four tickets to Fort Wayne came to more money than they had, much more, and dogs were not allowed on the bus.

"But we've got to take Snoopy with us," Nancy pleaded with the ticket seller, tears welling in her eyes. It had been a disastrous day, but this was the worst news of all.

Joe drew her away from the window. It was no use getting upset about Snoopy, he told her, until they figured out how to get themselves on the bus. With no choice but to ask for help, they called Travelers Aid, and with kind efficiency the local representative arranged for a motel room for them

for the night. There, with their boxes and bags piled in a corner, they put in a call to relatives back home, who promised to get together money for the fare and wire it the next day.

"But what about Snoopy?" Matthew said as soon as his father hung up the phone.

"We can't go without Snoopy," Jodi stated flatly.

Joe picked up the little dog. "Snoopy," he said, tugging her floppy ears in the way she liked, "I think you're going to have to hitchhike."

"Don't tease, Joe," Nancy said curtly.

"I'm not teasing, honey," he assured her, and tucked Snoopy into the crook of his arm. "I'm going to try to find an eastbound truck to take the old girl back for us."

At the local truck stop, Joe sat Snoopy on a stool beside him while he fell into conversation with drivers who stopped to pet her. "Gee, I'd like to help you out," one after another said. "She's awful cute and I wouldn't mind the company, but I'm not going through Fort Wayne this trip." The only driver who might have taken her picked Snoopy up and looked at her closely. "Naw," the man growled, "with an old dog like her, there'd be too many pit stops. I got to make time." Still hopeful, Joe tacked up a sign asking for a ride for Snoopy and giving the motel's phone number.

"Somebody'll call before bus time tomorrow," he predicted to the kids when he and Snoopy got back to the motel.

"But suppose nobody does?" Jodi said.

"Sweetie, we've got to be on that bus. The Travelers Aid can only pay for us to stay here one night."

The next day Joe went off to collect the wired funds while Nancy and the kids sorted through their possessions, trying to decide what could be crammed into the six pieces of luggage they were allowed on the bus and what had to be left behind. Ordinarily Snoopy would have napped while they worked, but now her eyes followed every move Nancy and the children made. If one of them paused to think, even for a minute, Snoopy nosed at the idle hand, asking to be touched, to be held.

"She knows," Jodi said, cradling her. "She knows something awful is going to happen."

The Travelers Aid representative arrived to take the belongings they could not pack, for donation to the local thrift shop. A nice man, he was caught between being sympathetic and being practical when he looked at Snoopy. "Seventeen is really old for a dog," he said gently. "Maybe you just have to figure she's had a long life and a good one." When nobody spoke, he took a deep breath. "If you want, you can leave her with me and I'll have her put to sleep after you've gone."

The children looked at Nancy but said nothing; they understood there wasn't any choice, and they didn't want to make it harder on their mother by protesting. Nancy bowed her head. She thought of all the walks, all the romps, all the picnics, all the times she'd gone in to kiss the children good-night and Snoopy had lifted her head to be kissed, too.

"Thank you," she told the man. "It's kind of you to offer. But no. No," she repeated firmly. "Snoopy's part of the family, and families don't give up on each other." She reached for the telephone book, looked up kennels in the yellow pages and began dialing. Scrupulously she started each call with the explanation that the family was down on their luck. "But," she begged, "if you'll just keep our little dog until we can find a way to get her to Fort Wayne, I give you my word we'll pay. Please trust me.

Please."

A veterinarian with boarding facilities agreed finally to take her, and the Travelers Aid representative drove them to her office. Nancy was the last to say goodbye. She knelt to take Snoopy's frosted muzzle in her hands. "You know we'd never leave you if we could help it," she whispered, "so don't give up. Don't you dare give up. We'll get you back somehow, I promise."

Once back in Fort Wayne, the Topps found a mobile home to rent, one of Joe's brothers gave them his old car, sisters-in-law provided pots and pans and bed linens, the children returned to their old schools and Nancy and Joe found jobs. Bit by bit the family got itself together. But the circle had a painful gap in it. Snoopy was missing. Every day Nancy telephoned a different moving company, a different trucking company, begging for a ride for Snoopy. Every day Jodi and Matthew came through the door asking if she'd had any luck and she had to say no.

By March they'd been back in Fort Wayne six weeks and Nancy was in despair. She dreaded hearing from Wyoming that Snoopy had died out there, never knowing how hard they'd tried to get her back. One day a friend suggested she call the Humane Society. "What good would that do?" Nancy said. "Aren't they only concerned about abandoned animals?" But she had tried everything else, so she telephoned Rod Hale, the director of the Fort Wayne Department of Animal Control, and told him the story.

"I don't know what I can do to help," Rod Hale said when she finished. "But I'll tell you this. I'm sure going to try." A week later, he had exhausted the obvious approaches. Snoopy was too frail to be shipped in the unheated baggage compartment of a plane. A professional animal transporting company wanted \$655 to bring her east. Shipping companies refused to be responsible for her. Rod hung up from his latest call and shook his head. "I wish the old-time Pony Express was still in existence," he remarked to his assistant, Skip Cochrane. "They'd have passed the dog along from one driver to another and delivered her back home."

"It'd have been a Puppy Express," Skip joked.

Rod thought for a minute. "By golly, that may be the answer." He got out a map and a list of animal shelters in Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana, and picked up the phone. Could he enlist enough volunteers to put together a Puppy Express to transport Snoopy by stages across five states? Would people believe it mattered enough for a seventeen-year-old dog to be reunited with her family that they'd drive a hundred or so miles west to pick her up and another hundred or so miles east to deliver her to the next driver?

In a week he had his answer, and on Sunday, March 11, he called the Topps. "How are you?" he asked Nancy.

"I'd feel a lot better if you had some news for me."

"Then you can begin feeling better right now," Rod told her jubilantly. "The Puppy Express starts tomorrow. Snoopy's coming home!"

Monday morning, in Rock Springs, Dr. Pam McLaughlin checked Snoopy worriedly. The dog had been sneezing the day before. "Look here, old girl," the vet lectured as she took her temperature, "you've kept your courage up until now. This is no time to get sick just when a lot of people are about to go to a lot of trouble to get you back to your family."

Jim Storey, the animal control officer in Rock Springs, had volunteered to be Snoopy's first driver. When he pulled up outside the clinic, Dr. McLaughlin bundled Snoopy in a sweater and carried her

to the car. &...

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