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The Fugitive

By Janette Blackwell

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Where are the dogs of yesteryear? They all seem to be some breed or another these days. They never used to be. Back in the forties, we had dogs that LEANED in one direction or another. Or maybe two or three directions at once. But we never went out and bought a specific brand of dog. Why would you buy a dog when the neighbors were giving away perfectly good pups for free, along with a jar of peaches and maybe some string beans?

It has always been hard to earn a living farming, and the animals on our Montana farm all had to have a use. The cats earned their living by catching the mice that ate the grain. The dogs earned their living, Daddy told us kids, by bringing in the cows at milking time.

Our dogs tended not to be real good at bringing in the cows, but we kept them anyway. Maybe because Daddy had a soft heart -- which he did -- but mainly, I think, because the dogs had a better understanding of what they were there for than we children did:

The dogs thought they were there to bark at every single car that went by.

Back when one or two cars came by in a day, we were glad to know that someone was coming down our hill, and, unless it was time for the mailman, we checked to see whose car it was.

The forties went by, then the fifties, and the number of cars increased. We no longer checked to see who it was. Which was not the fault of the dogs: they still barked at every single car.

By the sixties, I had left home but came back for vacations. And during one summer vacation I found out why we really needed that dog.

"There's someone hiding in our shack," said Daddy. "Whatever you do, don't go up there. Don't even go near it."

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The shack, which probably was built as a homesteader's shack, was at the top of the hill by our house. It had one main room with a table and chairs, a cupboard with a few dishes, a wood stove, and a double bed. An outdoor toilet out back beckoned with open door.

In the forties and fifties, Grandma cleaned the shack each June. She washed the dishes in the cupboard, washed all the patchwork quilts on the beds, and put fresh kerosene in the lamp. All to prepare for the workers who came to hoe our sugar beets, under a contract between the Mexican government and the sugar beet company. Under that contract a good worker could make fifty dollars a day: excellent wages in the forties and fifties.

By the late sixties, Daddy no longer grew sugar beets, and the shack had for years lain empty. Then our neighbor Nina Davis telephoned. "Have you got someone in your shack across the road from us?" she asked. "Because we're seeing a light in there at night."

"No. No one's supposed to be in there," said Mamma. But neither our family nor the Davises went to the shack to investigate, nor did anyone suggest calling the sheriff. The Davises were also native Montanans who went by the same code of behavior we did. I'd learned about this code when I was little: one of our neighbors had a practice of stealing from other neighbors. "Why don't we tell the sheriff?" I asked.

"If he got arrested, he might or might not get convicted. And if he got convicted, he'd get maybe six months in jail," said Mamma. "And when he got out of jail, he'd come back to our neighborhood to live. And one night our barn would burn down. Or maybe our house. Or someone would shoot our cows or maybe even us. Something. So we leave that situation alone."

Now that the rest of the country has discovered Montana and taken over a good chunk of it (the goodest chunk, in fact), people no longer think that way. The Bitterroot Valley has five times the population it had in my childhood. The sheriff has deputies, and according to the local newspaper they are busy day and night responding to complaints of barking dogs, domestic violence, and petty theft.

But, during that week in the late sixties, we and the Davises kept watch on the shack and did what we had been taught to do: nothing. "Look!" said Daddy, as our car drove slowly by one night. We looked, and, sure enough, a dim, grey light shone through the shack's window, which window was pretty dirty now that Grandma no longer gave it her attention. "He's lit the kerosene lamp."

"Must be reading in there," said Mamma softly.

That week we locked the doors of our house every night — something we had never done before — and Daddy slept with his pistol close at hand.

In case the dog barked in the middle of the night.

So that was why we'd put up with all that barking all those years, I realized. That and our family's soft hearts and, where some of those dogs were concerned, our soft heads as well.

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"The Davises tell me they haven't seen a light in that shack for three nights," Daddy said a few days later. "I'm going up with my pistol and investigate."

He went up at noonday, stood like a Western lawman with his back to one side of the door, gun ready. He suddenly whirled to face the shack and kicked the door open.

Silence.

He went inside, gun still at the ready. But the shack was empty. Our fugitive had fugited, leaving behind only a couple of well worn detective magazines and a pile of cigarette butts. And an unmade bed. Sure proof he hadn't been brought up right, you bet.

And, in case you wonder, Daddy didn't take the dog when he reconnoitered around the shack that day. Daddy was pretty fond of that little dog, and he didn't want him to get hurt.

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Dog The Bounty Hunter - Review Of Dog & Beth's Wedding.

By Edward Charkow

"Here comes The Dog, no longer on a Harley Hog" is how Duane "Dog" Chapman opens up this long-awaited episode in which he makes an honest woman of Beth Smith, his long term common law wife and fellow bounty hunter. If Beth were ever to smother dog (and she certainly does have the proper natural equipment to do that), it would have occurred in this episode of Dog the Bounty Hunter. Airing on Tuesday night, August 8, 2006 was the episode many have been waiting for -- To Love and to Cherish Dog and Beth's Wedding.

We see the Chapmans in the week leading up to their nuptials, and Beth is obsessed (like most women) with buying new shoes, fitting her wedding dress, and getting her hair done. Basically, her head is in the veil and not in the Bounty. It couldn't be more removed from the thoughts of Dog, which focus around catching a slew of fugitives, including a former Navy seaman named Brice. Brice is being hunted down for jumping bond after a criminal history that includes theft and drugs. Dog amplifies the risk of this bounty by saying that Brice is a "trained killer" since he was in the Service at one point.

Of course, Beth is ticked off that her intended is focused on grimy criminals instead of diamonds and roses, but this is Dog and we know he always pulls through in the end. If he doesn't, rest assure Beth

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will make his life miserable for a long time. The woman is ruthless, and Dog is whipped. In the words of his son Leland, "Looks like Dad's going to fold like a tent again" when Beth gives Dog a hard time. Decked out in leather, covered in prison-issue tats and always packing mace, Dog is Beth's to kick around. This episode is no different.

Beth has picked out a classic tux for Dog, who will have no part of that, thank you very much. Dog insists he is wearing a bulletproof vest with no shirt, jeans and a can of mace. He tells Beth that he has been in prison before and there is no way he is going to trap himself in the prison of a suit.

"I'd rather just get married as the Dog," he says. If not, he said he's not looking forward to the funeral that is his wedding. Poor Beth, marrying the Dog in his stinky old vest and a can of pepper spray. So, how does she cope She goes to the local stripper store - to buy her wedding shoes. After trying on several pairs of plastic do-me-pumps, she settles on a pair while stating every brides golden rule "When you go shopping where the strippers and ho's go, you'll always score."

Not to be outdone by Hollywood starlets, Beth flies to Hollywood for a custom made dress. If you have ever seen Beth, you'll know what stands in the way between Beth and a standard fit dress. Here's a hint there are two of them. It is a beautiful dress actually, and should go well with her plastic stripper shoes.

The first bounty goes pretty well, and they catch Brice with a window puncher in his pants. The fugitive tells Dog he had just found it in someone's apartment. We all know Dog ain't no Harvard grad, but when it comes to Criminals 101 you can't get anything past him. Dog can't resist pouring a bucket of salt into his wounds, telling Brice he'll be called Bo-Peep in prison. But then Dog's heart of gold takes over and he gives the fugitive a cigarette and lights it for him. This is a rite of passage for anyone who gets apprehended by the DOG; you'll always get a cancer stick as a reward. Thanks Dog!

The nuptials are a day or two away and Dog apprehends another fine citizen who claims to just have

some "jewelry" in his pocket. Turns out it's an ice pipe. I guess he wears it in his mouth. Iceheads, crackheads, basketball size breasts and stripper heels, sigh. Brings back memories of my own nuptials. Honestly, who other than the Chapmans host a gala affair in the midst of such an odd assembly of characters Of course, it all makes for good TV and for the more sentimental of us, it all does the heart good.

While Dog is out hunting down these characters he misses his own wedding rehearsal. But it's all good; he makes it for the party afterwards, which looks like a blast. Full Hawaiian garb, fragrant orchid-laden leis, tables of food and Dog in his conch-shell braids. Beth is looking forward to her wedding day and forgives Dog for missing the rehearsal. She puts it into perspective, saying "Today Big Daddy got his man, and tomorrow I get mine."

After such a happy night, the morning of the wedding brings somber news for the Chapman family. Dog's daughter, who lives in Alaska, was killed in a car accident; his daughter died on his wedding day. The family's tremendous faith and love for one another enables them to go through with the wedding, though he cries throughout the day for his daughter. Dog says, "There is a time to mourn and it's not

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right now. If God wanted to stop the wedding he wouldn't have killed my baby. That's not God." In true Dog style, he follows this tender moment with one of his cheesy (but heartfelt) expressions, "This blood don't run."

The sun comes out, a legless woman arrives in a wheelchair and Dog and Beth say "I Do". Finally - after all these years we have Mr. and Mrs. Dog Chapman, joined by handcuffs and hair bleach forever.

Find more out about Dog the Bounty Hunter at

<http://www.reality-fan.com>

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