

# Literary Musings



By PROF. ROBERT G. MULDER

The day was New Year's Eve, 1971. My wife and I were returning from a Christmas vacation in Florida via the turnpike. Cars were moving slower than usual for a misty rain was falling and vision was impaired considerably.

Suddenly my wife jumped as if she'd been shot. "Stop the car! Stop the car!" she pleaded.

"What on earth is wrong?" I asked, somewhat perturbed at her upset of the quiet cruise we were enjoying.

"Back up. Please. I think there's a puppy back there," she begged.

As soon as I managed to get out of the moving traffic and into the emergency lane, I began my slow movement back to the object of her exclamation.

Then we spotted her for the first time. She was standing beside a green plastic garbage bag, the same one that had been her prison until she had managed to wiggle herself free.

The first time I saw this puppy I felt sorry for her. She had no hair except for two small patches behind her ears and on her tail. About the size of an average grapefruit, she looked like a freshly hatched duckling. As we stood in the rain gazing at our new-found life, I suppose it was love or, at any rate, sympathy at first sight.

It took us no time to assemble an array of warm clothes, mostly my shirts, in a small cardboard box for her new temporary home. The trip on the freeway continued until we finally reached an exit where milk and a hamburger pattie were procured. The female pup ate ravenously.

"Oh, we'll leave her at the first S.P.C.A. we pass," my wife promised.

Strange things are wrought by a homeless female cooped up in a car with a sympathetic man and woman. For three hundred miles, we traveled, and if we passed any home for foundlings, we failed to spot them.

When we drove into our driveway several hours later, Gertie, as she was named by my wife, was already one of the family. We began to unload the car after we had made Gertie comfortable in a more spacious box in our kitchen.

The next day started a series of visits to the vet which was to continue throughout the year. We immediately learned that our puppy had a severe case of mange, which, according to the doctor, may never be completely cured. He kept Gertie for a week, gave her daily shots and baths, and released her to us with several kinds of medication.

My wife became the constant attendant to the sick canine. Careful attention was given to the doctor's prescribed schedule for Gertie's rehabilitation. We both became aware that she had an unusual sensitivity to our attention. It was as if she were trying to show real gratitude for her rescue which we had made.

Days and weeks grew into months. She responded beautifully to training and discipline. She became house and auto broken at an early age, and her disposition exceeded that of other pets

we had known. Like so many pet owners, we communicated verbally with Gertie having the full assurance that she understood.

After we had treated her for six months with little success, her doctor clipped over half of her body in order to have better access to the itchy spots she kept scratching. Needless to say, she looked hideous and we were embarrassed for her to go outside. The neighbors would not believe that such a sight as Gertie was not carrying some awful disease which may infect their own animals.

Therefore, we kept her with us—in the house, at my office, on trips in the car—so that we could explain to those who laughed at her unusual hair-clipped body. We didn't mind having our feelings hurt, but we felt that Gertie should be spared cruel ridicule. After all, it was she who was doing the suffering and we who had rescued her from that rainy turnpike on which she had been abandoned.

Months grew into a year. Many trips to the veterinarian had only prolonged Gertie's miserable, itchy existence. We were assured that she was not in pain, only uncomfortable, from the blood condition which made her itch. The unpleasant scent which her condition carried was partially soothed by pet spray.

Our moment of decision was soon to be upon us, however. On our most recent visit, Gertie's doctor said that he had done all he could. He told us what a noble thing we had done, but declared his inability to cure her. He seemed reluctant to keep accepting our money (By this time we had spent well over a hundred dollars) for a cure which was impossible. Because we had great confidence in our vet, we felt that his diagnosis should be accepted, and our rays of hope seemed to cloud with the mist in our eyes.

Yet, what other alternative was there—no cure, continued scratching and loss of hair, incessant spraying in order to kill the smell, and uneasiness for Gertie the rest of her life. There was one solution mentioned: pills, those tiny capsules which put suffering animals out of their misery for good; mercy killing is what humans call it. We both wondered if the animal kingdom had a similar terminology.

There were those of our friends who knew something of Gertie's plight. Almost everyone of them were in agreement; put her to sleep and get yourself another dog.

We got the pills and came home; neither of us spoke on the way. Gertie offered no resistance as we called her into the living room for what was to be her last visit.

My wife and I took our favorite chairs, and Gertie took her familiar sprawl under the piano bench. We all looked at each other. Only the gods know how similar our thoughts were running parallel at the time. I can only account for my own.

## Honor Students Listed

### PRESIDENT'S LIST

Anderson, Jeanne B., Bullock, Judy D., Davidson, Donna A., Drake, Sandra L., McDonald, Catherine R., Rothenberg, Bobbie J., Ward, Beechye L., Williamson, Curtis A.

### DEAN'S LIST

Ballard, James S., Barden, Gaye M., Bennett, Steven Lowell, Bishop, Robert., Blanchard, Terry E., Bowman, Stephen L., Braswell, James A., Bright, Richard L., Brown, Arleen R., Burgess, Gerald W., Butler, Linda A., Butler, Rickey G., Carr, Phillis A., Clements, Michael L., Colgin, Charles E., Cillier, Dwight G., Craddock, Howard B., Craddock, Sandra P., Crosbie, Roberta L., Curley, Esther E., Embrey, Patricia R., Fagan, Pamela S., Gaskin, Delores A., Gross, Debra A., Guy, Suzanne E., Helms, Michael E., Hill, Jo A., Humberstone, Karen D., Johnson, Alfred E., Jones, Vickie S., Killmon, Mark C., Klaus, Deborah A., Lakin, Patricia C., Lane, Randall C., Lawrence, Charles B., Linn, Gerald M., Jr., Long, Nancy L., Lowers, Edgar Lee, Moore, James E., Odio-Esene, Anthony Ehidiamé, Oleyar, Donna L., Parsons, Donald R., Peters, Stephen C., Ragland, Vickie S., Renner, Baldwin Keith, Sanders, Nathen S., Simkins, Steven R., Snider, Michael T., Sumner, Charlie B., Tilley, Willis C., Tyrrell, Edward B., Vann, Alice D., Williams, Susie M., Wulf, Walter J., Wynns, Joseph B., Jr.

### HONOR'S LIST

Abbott, Merle L., Jr., Adams, Edward P., Adkins, Patricia A., Bagby, Don W., Barham, Cindy L., Bass, Theresa D., Bates, Michael W., Boeggeman, Linda M., Boone, Terry C., Borntreger, Patricia E., Bowen, Maria C., Bowers, Leonard P., Brinkley, Jack R., Broadhurst, Duran R., Brooks, Deborah E., Brown, Coy L., Jr., Brown, Stanley D., Brown, William M., Bryant, David W., Bush, Joyce A., Butler, Wanda K., Byrum, Earlene F., Cearley, William D., Jr., Chandler, George D., Corbet, Debr J., Cruso, Robert D., Chenworth, Bernard Grey, Currie, Patricia G., Duke, Sylvia G., Echerd, Robin L., Eley, Claude A., Jr., Emery, Joseph L., Fallis, Patricia D., Ferrell, Garland Ricky, Forbes, Joseph B., Gaither, William T., Gatling, Shirley, George, Habeed C.,

Gibson, John G., Glover, Miley W., Goney, Jerry E., Goodin, George L., Greene, Dennis L., Greene, Stanley T., Grey, Anne K., Griffin, Janet Marie, Guertin, Michael R., Hall, Ronald J., Hardesty, Russell K., Hare, Paul R., Hassell, Alice L., Heath, Betsy J., Hewett, Ralph C., Holder, Vanessa D., Hollingsworth, Arlie K., Hosea, Marilyn G., Hughes, Clifford Craven, Hulings, Harold E., Hunt, John R., Ives, Nancy K., Jones, Carl, Kilcoyne, Mary A., Lane, Ellen A., Lavelle, Robert J., Long, Michael L., McCain, Judy M., McClelland, Marsha L., McKenny, Matthew J., Mann, John R., Meier, Douglas P., Midyette, Mary E., Miller, Betsy L., Miller, Marlene Kay, Mitchell, Elma Yvonne, Morgan, Samuel P., Morgan, William D., Noe, Fletcher, Ormand, Robert A., Owenby, Faye Elise, Page, Dennis Wayne, Parker, Lorenzp, Parrish, Barbara G., Petty, Cheryl J., Pobst, Olive E., Powers, Donna M., Pruette, David R., Pruitt, Jaunita G., Ray, George T., Richards, Marvin Stephen, Rollins, Timothy Lee, Roundtree, Linda F., Rowe, Jennings S., Sadler, James W., Santiago, Diosdado A., Simmons, David K., Slater, Dayton F., Jr., Smigel, Carolyn B., Smith, Vera E., Smith, William A., Stanko, James, Thompson, Joe, Titcomb, Ginger K., Tope, John C., Troy, Richard H., Tuttle, Paul A., Jr., Veneris, James M., Vernon, Preston M., Vinson, Danny R., Wade, Charles M., Warmack, Charles P., Warren, Paul E., III, Weede, Belinda A., Weeks, Branda K., West, Barbara J., Whitaker, Larry W., White, Deborah L., White, Elizabeth Ann, Whitley, Ella M., Wilkins, Pamela L., Williams, Malcolm S., Winters, Stephen G., Wright, Judy G., Wright, Sylvester M., Yakin, Andy F., Yerger, John A.

### The Old Timer



"There's no sense in advertising your troubles. No one will buy them."

Could we take into our hands the life we had preserved, a feeble life already discarded to die when we came upon the scene? Would we be able to live with ourselves if we let an innocent victim of disease, incurable as it may be, give us the privilege of playing God? How could we so easily forget our debt to Gertie who had come to love and trust us as master and mistress?

The dog seemed to sense what thought were running rampant in our minds. She seemed to know that we had to do what we were doing and that the decision was not easy. Slowly she left her place on the floor and walked over to my wife for a final pat of approval. With tears in her eyes, the mistress had Gertie sit for her; Gertie wanted to shake hands. Afterwards, she came over to me and "spoke lightly," something that I had taught her.

The thought of what faced me was sickening to my stomach. I left the two ladies in the living room and went to the bathroom where I flushed the pills of eternal sleep into oblivion. Then the three of us went for a happy drive.