



STAFF PHOTO BY DAWN ELLEN BOYD

BEST FRIENDS...second grader Payton Leggett and his pit bull, Pilgrim. The Leggetts bought Pilgrim three Thanksgivings ago.

Payton And Pilgrim Are Ready For Thanksgiving

BY DAWN ELLEN BOYD

For eight-year-old Payton Leggett, Thanksgiving is the best holiday of the year.

It is his favorite holiday because three Thanksgivings ago, the Leggetts bought their pet dog, a pit bull named Pilgrim.

"We named him that because we got him on Thanksgiving," Payton explained. "He's black and white, and he's got one black eye and one white eye. He's got a black tail with a little bit of white on the end."

Payton's mother, Ginger, laughed. "I wanted to name him Petey like the dog on the 'Little Rascals,' but Payton and his dad wouldn't hear of it."

The Leggetts chose a pit bull because Payton's dad, Robert, had one as a child and always wanted another. "My husband has always loved dogs," Ginger said.

The family moved to Grissetown from North Myrtle Beach, S.C., in June. Robert, a 1970 graduate of Shallotte High School, had wanted to move back to North Carolina for many years. Ginger said it was partially because his parents lived in Brunswick County, but mostly because "he was a North Carolinian and he wanted to come back."

Robert spends a great deal of time working on the shrimp boat "Captain Leggett," and Pilgrim serves as a watch dog for Payton and his mother.

"Pilgrim guards real well," said Payton. "He barks up a storm when a stranger comes in the yard."

Payton attends Union Primary School during the day, but when he comes home he likes to play with

Pilgrim. "I like to pet him. He jumps on me. I go in his dog house—it's got a floor—and he comes in and tries to lick me," Payton said.

The Leggetts thought Pilgrim was such a good pet, other family members decided to get a pit bull too. Payton's grandfather, Henry Leggett, carried on the "holiday" tradition and named his pit bull Christmas because he bought it in December.

Sometimes, Payton explained, Pilgrim gets into trouble. "He likes to tear up car seats," he said. "He tore up my daddy's truck seat right where your head goes back."

"He dugged a big hole in the yard he sleeps in sometimes too," Payton added.

In April, Payton and Pilgrim will get a new playmate: the Leggetts are expecting their second child. Payton insisted, "I want a brother."

Ginger said, "He really wants a boy, but I don't care as long as it's healthy."

Robert will be back from shrimping at St. Augustine, Fla., in time for Thanksgiving, and the Leggetts will go to Payton's great-grandmother's home in Wilmington for an old-fashioned family get together with turkey and all the trimmings.

"There will be about 30 people there counting immediate family, aunts, uncles and cousins," said Ginger.

Payton said the best part of visiting his great-grandmother for Thanksgiving is "Pilgrim gets to go." He continued, "Pilgrim is just one of my best friends. He don't eat dog food, but he likes turkey. Just the meat though, not the bones—those will hurt him."

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