

I have heard many times from various sources that a person has one good dog in his or her life. That is perhaps an overstatement, but it is probably true that some dogs we have had over the years have been far superior to others.

And, it is also true that we have had one exceptional dog. Her name was Tutsy, and she was the half Border Collie, half Blue Heeler, bob-tailed black and white dog that was far smarter than we were. We didn't know much about training a sheep dog. All the previous dogs here on this family farm were what I call "Farmyard Shepherds." One does not see them anymore, but they were some kind of collie/sheep dog mix, usually brown and white, that one could see curled up in the yard of almost every small farm in the area. Andersons had Shep, an uncle had Cappy, another uncle had Pete (a girl dog), and we always had a Duke. Some Dukes were girls—it didn't matter. We had a Duke.

We bought Tutsy as a pup, and she soon had us trained. And, when she was grown up, she became a valued and trusted partner on the farm. In those days, we had not yet adopted the paddock system of pasturing, and the way was clear from the farm buildings all the way to the northwest reaches of the farm. Sometimes, we wanted to bring the sheep in closer to home in the evening. It was no problem to send Tutsy after them. She took a more direct route than she had to take on the way back, when she needed, of course, to bring the sheep flock by the two track farm lane. On the way back to the woods, she jumped fences. On the return trip, after gathering the flock, she quietly and slowly brought them home.

During the years we had Tutsy, we were milking a small herd of cows, probably no more than a dozen. This was during the last gasp of the small farm era when most families were engaged in diversified farming. Tutsy was adept at bringing in the cows at milking time.

During much of the year, it was dark in the morning when we went after the cows. After going with us a few times, it became unnecessary for one of us to accompany Tutsy. She knew where the cows would be, and she went after them herself.

One morning, though, she performed the act that pretty much guaranteed that she would hold the title of "the best dog we'd ever have." We went to the barn as usual that morning, and sent Tutsy out after the cows. They were at the far end of the pasture, and it was some time before we heard them coming. The milk cows paced

into the barn, and each one went to her own place. Tutsy stood in the doorway. It might seem strange, but that dog had a puzzled look on her face. She glanced down the row of cows, wheeled, and disappeared into the darkness. A cow was missing. In a few minutes, we heard the sound of a rapidly moving critter. Here came the cow, and an annoyed looking dog was right on her heels. I guess Tutsy could count.