

## Airedales and Children

When I had my daughter Kate, our Airedale Lady did several things that surprised me. When I was about seven months pregnant, Lady had a false pregnancy. A dog's gestation period is about two months, so when I had Kate, Lady thought she had puppies as well. She started collecting the kids' stuffed animals and would take them into her "room" and get them in nursing position and nest with them. When I brought Kate home from the hospital, Lady was convinced that I had one of her puppies (i.e. Kate). Lady showed great interest in Kate, always wanting to smell her and clean her. She would often whimper like a mother dog when she would smell, hear, or see Kate. When I would get up at night to feed Kate, we would sit on the living room couch and Lady, who could see us from her room, would sit at the gate and whine and whimper. It often brought to mind a picture of Lady dragging baby Kate into her room where she would arrange Kate and then curl herself around Kate's body. Lady never got the chance to claim Kate to her imaginary whelping bed. And Lady never acted annoyed with me for kidnapping her baby. Kate often had unusual hair styles because when I would hold Kate in our rocking chair, Lady would come up and clean Kate's head, giving long licks that would put twirls in Kate's baby-fine hair. Her hair would then dry in these strange positions. I wonder if this is a variation on the term "cowlick"?

The story ends with Kate and I taking a week's visit to the hospital where Kate was treated for pneumonia. Upon our return home, Lady's hormonal tide had turned and she was ready for her brood to be weaned and on their own. Lady couldn't have cared less about the kids' stuffed animals or the caretaking of baby Kate.

Another story involving Kate occurred when Kate was learning to crawl. Actually, she was crawling and was exploring every place that she could crawl to. The back door had been opened enough that Kate could crawl out into the opening of the door. She was slowly making her way out the door when Lady, who was out in the backyard, discovered that the door had been opened and, as was her usual style, Lady charged the door with full-speed Airedale-size enthusiasm and baby Kate blocking the entranceway. I realized what was about to happen without being able to pull Kate out of the way in time when the most amazing thing happened. As Lady rounded the corner of the house to approach the back door, she caught sight of Kate and put on full brakes. I thought that this still would result in disaster because Lady did not have

enough time to stop. But nonetheless, it worked. Lady came to a screeching halt and then quietly, carefully, as though walking on eggshells, she walked over Kate, the left rear and front legs on Kate's right side, the right rear and front legs on Kate's left side. Lady's movements looked like a football player going through those tires during a workout. One foot in, one foot out, only slowly and carefully. Through the back door Lady came, in a manner befitting her name, genteel and etiquette-wise Lady. Not the "Mac Truck in a Big Hurry" entrance that we usually see.