



Buzzy

Bless the Lord who crowns you with tender mercies (Psalm 103, NKJV).

Countless verses have been written on the puppy and the kitten. These are the first lines of a poem written by my eighth-grade Latin teacher who was hands-down the most popular poet at the middle school located high on a hill in the small town of Spooner, Wisconsin.

He would often read one of his poems before he put on his stern face and ordered oral exercises in declining nouns and conjugating verbs. Students repeatedly asked him to write a poem for them. He knew better. Do it for one, you've got to do it for all. I was very specific in my request, however, begging him to write a poem about Buzzy. Finally, after months of refusal, he handed me a hand-written poem on lined notebook paper titled: "Why I can't write a poem about Buzzy."

As a young child my favorite book had been *Heidi*, the story of a Swiss orphaned girl who lived high in the Alps. The text and pictures always identified her with goats. I dreamed of being a Heidi. Then the May 1954 issue of *National Geographic* had a cover-story of two women and their goats in rural New York—women who operated Thunderhill Farm. (I still have that issue in safe-keeping.) After reading the article and looking at the pictures, I was never the same. I wanted a goat.

Four years passed before my parents consented. My grandfather kicked in the two dollars, and that spring he took me to a farm several miles away where we purchased a darling little white female barely a month old that I bottle-fed through the summer. I named her Buzzy for a high school cheerleader who had been very kind to me.

For miles around, I became known as the girl with the goat. Buzzy and I explored every hillside, field, stream, riverbank and trail on our 200-acre forested farm. True, she jumped on our car and over the fence into the garden,

infuriating my folks. But who could not laugh at and love Buzzy?

I've always been somewhat bothered by the biblical take-down of goats. Had Jesus played with his own pet goat, might he have sent the sheep to perdition rather than the goats? In fact, today, sheep are far less prized than goats. Goats are more profitable for their milk, cheese and meat—even for shearing. They are rented out to clear brush and they "make adorable pets," according to an online site, "because of their ability to form close bonds with their owners." How well I know. Buzzy and I were almost inseparable.

In my teacher's poem, he stated that poets have written about every animal from the walrus and eel to "humpy dromedaries" and

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"giraffes six meters high." And that there are "lines on lions penned by literary giants." So why can't he write a poem about Buzzy? The last lines say it all: "But never has a bard of note said anything about a goat."

For years, I had tried to make contact with him. Then, having improved my own skills and with better Internet access, I found him in California. To my great disappointment, however, I learned from his daughter that he had just recently died.

I was devastated—if I had only tracked him down a year earlier. I told his daughter about the poem and after I sent her a copy in the mail, she called back with her mother on another line. I listened to stories from both of them, and I shared my own memories.

All three of us were crowned with tender mercies that afternoon as we laughed together about his clever poem and how much it had meant to me over the years. □

—Ruth Tucker