



Countryplace Scrapbook



Spudderings



Attention, spud fans! Keep your and photographs and send them or photograph, we'll give you a Countryplace, Box 2581, and a daytime phone number.

"Spuds" Is a Hero

First, there was Rin Tin Tin. Then, there was Lassie. Now, there's *Spuds*, a heroic dog for our times. When it came to rescuing Dirk Tanis, Jr., then 15, Spuds was no dud. The spunky Dalmatian proved himself worthy of the breed famous for being the mascot of firefighters when the Tanises' house in Newport, South Carolina, caught on fire.

Dirk, now 16, said he had come home that fateful afternoon from a church carwash, tired and hungry. He began heating a skillet of grease to make some onion rings, sat down in a recliner, and fell asleep. The next thing the dozing teenager knew, Spuds was biting the hand that feeds him.

"Spuds had never done that before," says Gay Tanis, Dirk's mom.

"The flames were to the ceiling by that point," Gay says. "The microwave had started melting, and the danger was that it would put out toxic gases."

Dirk turned off the stove, then scrambled to a

telephone to call 911.

"While he was doing this, our kitten, Gizmo, became fascinated by the flames," explains Gay. "She was so low to the ground, the smoke wasn't affecting her at all. So Spuds picked the cat up by the scruff of the neck and carried her outside."

When the Newport Volunteer Fire Department arrived, the fire had burned itself out. "The fire department was so impressed with this dog," Gay says.

But the Tanis family admits that they were surprised by the quick thinking of their pet.

"The research I'd done said [Dalmatians] were very intelligent animals," Gay says. "Believe me, they're not intelligent." Well, at least, Spuds isn't, she clarifies.

PHOTOGRAPH: MIC SMITH / THE HERALD, ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA



"[Spuds] is pretty stupid," son Dirk agrees. "Sometimes he runs into walls."

Oh, well. Perhaps, like people who somehow seem to develop superhuman strength during an emergency, Spuds had a brief flash of canine bril-

liance on the afternoon of the fire.

"The dog does nothing," Gay says.

Oh, don't get her wrong. Spuds is much beloved. And the family agrees that he earned his keep for always in that one shining moment.

Pint-Size Gardener Grows Giant Tater

Perhaps it was Anna Wilson's long years of experience that contributed to her success. After all, the 10-year-old from Geneva, Alabama, has been gardening "since I was 5," she says.

She must have toiled for many long hours to have grown such a masterful example of produce.

Not really, Anna shrugs. "I just left it out there for a long time." "It" is a *gigantic sweet potato* weighing 8½ pounds. The "spudtacular" potato came from a volunteer plant.

Anna confidently says, "When I grow up, I'll probably be a farmer."

In addition to sweet potatoes, Anna has grown corn, zucchini, and pep-



PHOTOGRAPH: DONNA MCCORMACK, COURTESY OF ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, ALABAMA

pers. "I don't like to eat zucchini and peppers," she confides. "But I love [sweet] potatoes."

And what about her special 8½-pound spud? Did it feed the entire Wilson family for a month of Sundays? Not exactly.

Anna says sadly, "My mother gave it to the preacher."



"eyes peeled" for any and all potato-related stories "spuddering" our way. If we publish your tater story "spudtacular" prize. Address them to "Spudderings," Birmingham, AL 35202. Please include an address. Sorry, but we can't return items.

A Sub Sunk by Spuds?

It was April 1943. The U.S.S. *O'Bannon* silently glided through the waters off the Solomon Islands. Suddenly, an enemy submarine was spotted on the surface. The U.S. destroyer let loose a barrage and disabled the Japanese sub so badly that the vessel was unable to submerge itself.

When the commander of the desperate sub sidled his injured craft close to the *O'Bannon*, the U.S. guns were made useless. The Japanese crewmen began scrambling out of their sub and onto the deck.

Thinking quickly, the American crew started pounding away at the invading enemy with *spud missiles*—potatoes stashed in a locker on deck. Mistaking the spuds for handgrenades, the Japanese surrendered to the tater offensive.

It's a great story. But alas, it's only a story. At the U.S.

Navy Department Library Historical Center in Washington, D.C., the very nice reference librarian there, Glenn E. Helm, says, yes, he too has heard the story, but that there is no truth to it. Well, maybe just a smidgen of truth.

Glenn sent an article from the *Navy Times* that outlined the facts. The *O'Bannon* really did sink a Japanese sub in April 1943—using guns, not spuds. Afterwards, the U.S. commanding officer asked his crew to confirm the sunken submarine's identification numbers. The ship's cook was peeling potatoes on deck when the fighting broke out, so he was absolutely positive he had the correct numbers. After all, he said, he had been close enough to throw potatoes at the sub.

A fine tater tale, don't you think?



ILLUSTRATIONS: RO E. WATKINS, JR.