

JUNE BROWN

Everyone needs a best friend and I was lucky enough to have one. I grew up in a one-parent family. My mother had a beauty salon and had to work six days and three evenings a week. Sometimes we lived behind her shop, sometimes we lived across the street, but no matter where we lived, there was never any children for me to play with and I was a very lonely child.

My mother knew I was lonely, knew I needed company and knew she couldn't be there for me like other mothers, so when I was nine years old, she brought home a surprise that changed my life.

She handed me a large cardboard box and when I opened it, a little puppy stared up at me. He had curly black hair, big brown eyes, floppy ears and a tail that would not stop wagging. Instantly, that little Cocker Spaniel became my best friend.

I named him Tippy and we did everything together. He sat beside me at the table, eagerly awaiting the juicy pieces of meat I would sneak to him. At night, he would curl up on my bed and when I rode my bike, Tippy would sit in my carrier basket. I would pedal as fast as I could down the street and Tippy would open his mouth to catch the wind, his pink tongue dangling to one side, and his floppy ears flowing out behind him like two sails. It made people laugh as we flew by. We played hide and seek, fetch the ball, and we swam together too. Cocker Spaniels are water dogs so Tippy swam as well as I did.

As my best friend, Tippy didn't like it when I had to go to school. If he got out of the house, he would race to the school and bark outside the windows. Often, the principal would call my mother to come and get him. I couldn't imagine life without Tippy, so one day, thinking I would get into trouble for something I'd done, I decided to run away from home. The only thing I took with me was Tippy and a can of his dog food.

I got older, life moved forward for me. As a teenager, I didn't need Tippy's company as much, however, his enthusiastic bark and the tail wags each time I came home from school or a date convinced me that Tippy was still my most loyal and best friend.