

Kids' KOrner

Blind Dog Plays Ball, Herds Cattle, Knows Boundaries

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) —
Like most farm families Nancy and
Ardith Waltz have a dog that roams
free on the land.

Visit the Manheim farm tucked
in back of a winding farm lane, and
Jody will greet you with a friendly
wag of the tail. When Nancy or
Ardith call Jody, the Australian
Blue Heeler, is off and running.

There is no hesitation, no awk-
ward gait or confused whining to
indicate that Jody is different than
other dogs.

But 9-year-old Jody does not
have eyes. Two years ago, glauco-
ma, an eye disease, erupted swiftly,
and both eyes needed to be
removed.

The Waltz family was devas-
tated. They thought that Jody
would need to be put to sleep.

But they found a veterinarian who
assured them that in 10 days Jody
would adjust to the blindness and
find ways to cope.

"She adjusted quicker than we
did," Nancy said. "She never
showed that she was in pain, never
complained."

The feisty dog was soon follow-
ing Nancy around as confident as if
she could see with both eyes.

Although Jody mingles freely
with the many cats on the farm, she
is off and chasing if one of the cats
takes off running.

"Dogs are just like children,"
Nancy said. "Lots of TLC (tender,
loving care) is everything she
needs."

Nancy said that the family has a
special affinity for Jody because
it's like having a handicapped child

even though she doesn't act
handicapped.

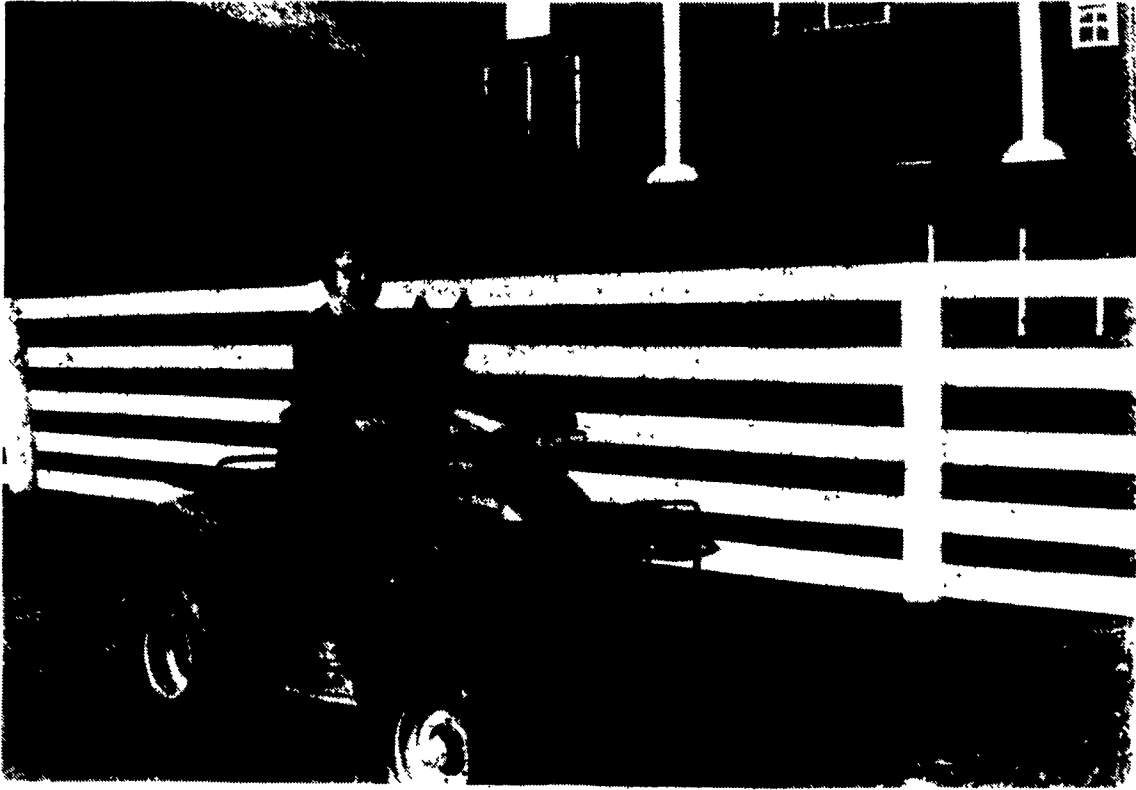
"She's a real joy," she said.

Because the dog was so well
acquainted with the farm before
her eyes were removed, Jody knew
instinctively where to find open
doors, her bed, food, and other
necessities. The one thing the
Waltz family does is string baler
twine across the bottom of upper
barn doors to warn the dog to stop.
They put hay bales at the bottom of
hay holes so that if Jody falls, the
hay will provide a soft landing.

But, Jody is an amazing dog who
by and large seems to be able to
fend for herself. She does not bump
into things when going from one
place to another. When Nancy
starts the 4-wheeler, Jody leaps up
for a ride. She likes tractor rides
around the 89 acres that the Walt-
zes plant in corn, tobacco, wheat,
and hay. The purebred Black
Angus and Charolais-cross cattle
that the Waltz's raise on the farm is
another attraction for Jody even
though she cannot see them.

"Losing eyes no reason to get rid
of a dog," Nancy said. "The
expense to remove them is worth
it."

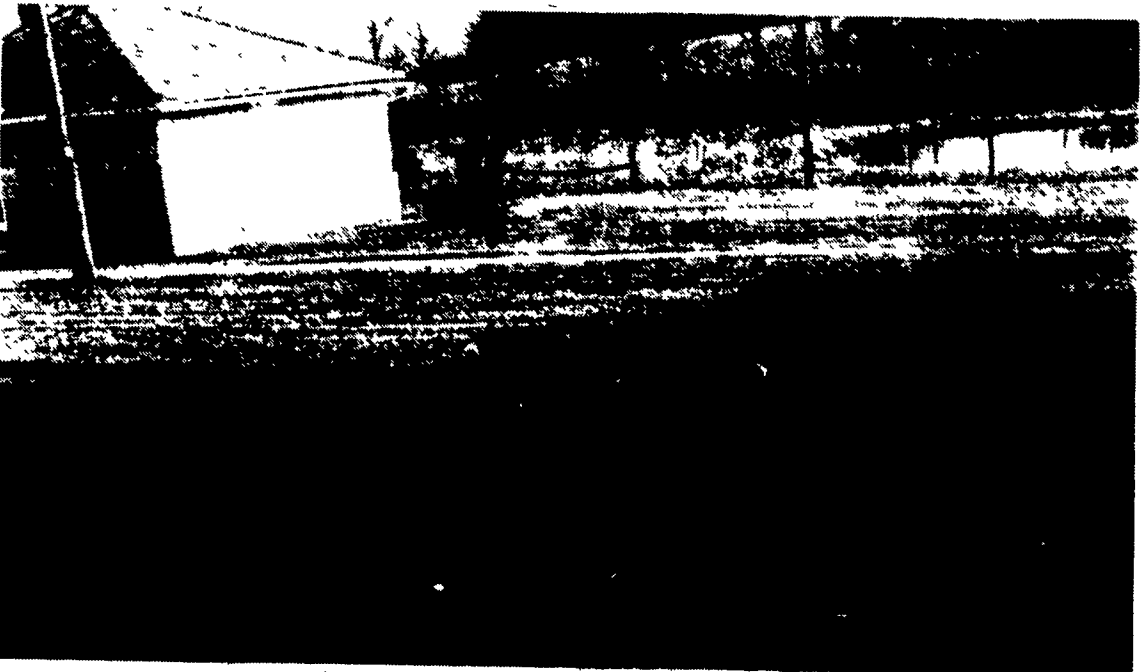
The vet told us that most people
don't want dogs without eyes. The
New Jersey vet, who specializes in
ophthalmology (diseases of the
eye), travels to different clinics
across the states to help dogs like
Jody. If the disease is caught in
time, it can often be treated with
medication. Since the operation to
remove the eyes, Jody does not
need to take any special medica-
tion.



A 4-wheeler ride around the farm with Nancy is one of Jody's favorite activities. The red barns and buildings surrounded by rolling acreage, a pond, and trees, make Ridge Field Farm one of the most attractive farms in the area.



Although she can no longer see, the instincts of the Australian Heeler breed remain intact as Jody waits for Nancy's command to herd cattle on the Waltz farm.



Blindness does not stop Jody from playing catch. Jody's hearing and smell compensates for the loss of sight. As long as she can hear the ball zinging through the air, she's off and running to retrieve it.



Both of Jody's eyes have been removed but she can retrieve the ball for her master or mistress because she depends upon smell and sound to guide her.



Jody cannot see, but her sense of smell and hearing direct her to a face-to-face confrontation with one of the herd being raised for direct sales of beef on Ridge Field Farm.