A family dog truly is a treasure, especially if that dog is just an old mutt.
My husband Jason and I rescued a dog that we found at a Dumpster in our neighborhood. Jason first discovered her snuggled up next to a pile a broken limbs. She was extremely friendly and showed the signs of a confused animals who was literally dumped off.
Jason told me about the poor animal that evening.
“If she’s out there tomorrow, I may bring her home,” he said.
I could tell he was testing the waters with me to see if I would bite on the idea of bringing a pet home. I thought about it but was soon heading off to bed.
The next afternoon, we went back to the Dumpsters with our daily trash bag. And there she was, still hiding behind a mountain of brush.
Getting out of the truck, I went over to her and began petting her side. Her ribs were the first thing I felt on her. But she wagged her tail and nudged her nose against my hand.
“Open the door,” I said, picking her up. “We’re taking her home.”
A few weeks later, she was as fat as a tick. Her coat seemed brighter. Her tail wagged more. And she was the most loving animal I have ever seen.
We called her DeDe.
The best part about it was that she loved kids.
Just the other day, DeDe was sitting in the front yard as two kids tumbled all over her. Our son James ran around her, acting like a bear. Our daughter Elsie kept touching her nose and laughing when DeDe gave her a quick lick.
The whole time, DeDe remained still and steady as the kids had their way with her.
I had a dog just like DeDe when I was growing up. His name was Roho and he was the mutt of Monticello. He reminded me of the Tramp in that Disney movie, only he had floppy ears instead of the kind that stand up.
Roho showed up under our carport one autumn evening. Maw Maw gave him some food but vowed not to let him in the house.
Three days later, he was under the family quilt on the living room couch.
Roho was my constant companion. He would walk with Paw Paw and I on our daily morning strolls. He would sit next to me as we watched morning cartoons. He even liked watching the Price is Right and would howl at the television every time they played the game with the yodelling mountain climber.
He let me tie down my Barbie dolls on his back and take them on a safari in the back yard.

He would eat the squash, broccoli and other food I didn't want from under the table. Except for brussel sprouts, he ate just about everything.

During thunderstorms, Maw Maw would let him sleep with me. He always sat at the foot of the bed and stood up every time a huge clap of thunder shook the house.

He would let me dress him in baby clothes. And despite the mocking he got from other neighborhood children, he would let me stroll him around in a baby carriage with a bonnet on.

When a skunk tried to spray me in the yard one night, Roho defended me. Getting sprayed himself in the process, he managed to scare the critter away. As we scrubbed him with potatoes and tomato juice under the carport that night, it was as almost as if he was giving me a "you owe me" look.

My summers with my grandparents always included Roho. When they would visit Momma and me in Jackson during the school year, they would bring him along.

But over the years, I stopped dressing him in baby clothes. The Barbie dolls were shoved into the toy box. The baby carriage was put into storage. And I began to eat all my vegetables.

Looking back, there were moments when I honestly think Roho wanted to be dressed up just one more time. He would hang around the kitchen, hoping for a carrot or two. He even began to bark at things that weren't there just to let you know he would still protect you.

And even though I grew up, I still took the time to pet him. I would grab him in my lap to watch television because he didn't have the strength to jump on the couch anymore. Patting my leg, he would still follow me wherever I went.

I was about to start high school when it was discovered that Roho had a number of tumors. We were told nothing could be done, and we would need to put him down.

Even though he was only a dog, Roho was my most special friend when I was a little girl. I grew up as an only child, and he was always by my side. He played with me, let me talk to him for hours.

He was more than my dog, he was my best friend.

I think back to Roho when I see my own children playing with DeDe. I hope that they have the same memories and affection for her as I did with my own dog.

As DeDe glances up at me, it almost looks as if she is smiling and saying thanks.

And I know that Roho thanked and loved me too.