

King nearly upstaged by dog in high school play

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News
 Man's best friend stole his thunder, as King Arthur, played by Daniel Blake, was nearly upstaged by Horrid the dog, played by Pokey Dawg, in the Goodland High School production of "Camelot" this weekend.

The two actors, both from the same family, vied for position of "top dog" in the musical.

"I can tell she loves being up there on stage," Blake said.

Pokey, an Australian sheepdog and border collie mix, was a Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter dog. Blake said his family adopted her after she followed him home one day about five years ago.

Jan Lambertz, animal shelter board member, said Pokey came along before they started foster care for their animals, but the family agreed to keep her until they found a good home.

"She fit into their family so well they decided to keep her," she said. "Pokey is a real sweet dog."

Blake's mother Peggy Siruta said the animal shelter has not only been helpful with the adoption of Pokey, but they were also supportive when she ran away recently. She said Lambertz called her and even visited Pokey in "doggy jail."

"I was really comforted by the animal shelter," Siruta said.

For her acting debut, Pokey won the role by being calm and collected on stage.

Directors started out looking to cast a dog that would not bark or go to the bathroom on stage, but they found that Pokey was adept at acting.

Michael Smith, playing Horrid the dog's owner Pellinore, asks

Pokey to look around at one point on stage. Blake said she moves her head from side to side.

"She is so in tune to what is going on," he said.

Blake said he thinks Pokey likes the extra attention, too. He said when they performed for the grade school, she wagged her tail and licked the kids' hands.

"She just had a great time," he said. "She is so good with kids. She just doesn't get angry very quickly."

Pokey is playing an essential role, Blake said, in establishing Pellinore's character as slightly unstable.

"She builds up Michael's character," he said.

In the play, one of Smith's lines describes the dog saying "she looks like an unmade bed, but she's actually a dog."

"It really describes her," Blake said.

He said he has worked with family before; his sister Hannah acted in last year's production of "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers." Blake, a senior this year, has been in a musical all four years of high school and he said he is excited about playing the lead.

Even before she started acting, the family knew Pokey was a special dog.

After Siruta, had back surgery, Pokey stayed with her all the time.

"She never left my side," she said.

Blake said Pokey took walks with his mother and helped her up at night to go to the bathroom. Siruta said while she was recovering, she never needed to use a leash with Pokey, and if something happened, Pokey would bark until help arrived.



Pokey Dawg (right,) playing Horrid the dog, struts his stuff as he is led on stage by Pellinore (Michael Smith) at the dress rehearsal of Goodland High School's production of "Camelot." Although he doesn't have any lines to remember, Pokey plays an important role in keeping up cast morale and establishing Pellinore's character.

Photo by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

Pokey has proven herself as a smart dog, Blake said. She used to

go crazy, he said, when they would say the word "walk" but even after

they started spelling it out, she still knows what they mean.

"She knows all types of stuff," he said.

Blake said Pokey gets along with her fellow actors and has been to several musical practices to get used to the stage and the lights.

"All the cast just loves her," he said.

She didn't make any friends, however, he said, when she ate the cast's french fries before the Wednesday performance for grade school students.

"She's always begging for food," he said.

Blake said Smith had trouble getting Pokey to move at first, but he taught him a trick with treats and now she follows Smith around the school. After working with the dog, he said Smith compared her to a small car.

"Pokey describes her well," Blake said. "She's not very active. She likes sleeping."

As for stage fright, he said Pokey doesn't seem to be too worried about her performances. Unlike the dog, Blake was facing the lead in "Camelot" with 226 lines.

"I'm ready to go," he said on the Friday before the first show. "I've been looking forward to this for four years."

Siruta said the entire family is proud to see Blake and Pokey in the musical.

"It's pretty neat," she said.

Lambertz said there are still about 80 dogs, all as special as Pokey, waiting for adoption at the animal shelter. She said although they are proud of their new star, she just hopes all the animals can be placed in wonderful homes.

"Stardom is OK," she said, "but a loving home is what we wish for these dogs."

matters of record

Accidents

The following accidents were reported to the Goodland Police Department:

Nov. 10 — Tim Armknecht was driving a 1997 Ford pickup east on 13th Street when he stopped at a sign. He misjudged a distance and pulled out in front of Angela Adair in a 1992 Ford pickup who hit Armknecht's car.

Goodland Police

The following crimes have been reported to the Goodland Police Department:

Nov. 11 — Sexual battery of a juvenile was reported at 1407 Grand.

Real Estate

The following real estate transactions were reported by the Sherman County Register of Deeds:

Ada L. Taylor to John and Shelly K. Madden Heid, of Decatur County, the west 75 feet, Lot 21, all of Lots 22, 23 and 24, Block 66, Original Town of Goodland.

Maxine Trachsel, trustee of the Walter J. Trachsel Revocable Trust, to Lobo Production Inc., a Colorado Corporation, a tract in the NE/4, Sec. 5, T8S, R39W.

J. Kendall and Jacque Cooper to Charles C. Bohme, Lots 13, 14 and the south 2 feet, Lot 15, Third Addition to the City of Goodland.

J W Tracy Farms to William C. and Eva Lou Selby the SE/4, Sec. 28, T9S, R37W; the SE/4, Sec. 1, T9S, R38W; and the N/2 and the SW/4, Sec. 14, T8S, R37W.

Wal-Mart Real Estate Business Trust, of Delaware, quitclaim to Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. of Benton County, Ark. a tract in the NE/4, Sec. 25, T8S, R40W.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Benton County, Ark. to Jayhawk Investors a tract in the NE/4, Sec. 25, T8S, R40W.

Gregory D. and Denise Sorwell quitclaim to Gregory D. and Denise Sorwell, Lots 6 and 7, Block 63, Original Town of Goodland.

Douglas L. House quitclaims to Hunter K. House an undivided one third interest in the NE/4, Sec. 16, T9S, R39W.

Sherman County Sheriff Doug Whitson to Midfirst Bank all of Lot 7, the north 20 feet, Lot 8, Block 38, Second Addition to the City of Goodland, the foreclosed property of Marc Fenner.

Sherman County Sheriff Doug Whitson to Bankwest of Kansas, Lots 18 and 19, Block 66, Original Town of Goodland, the foreclosed property of Jesus and Barbara Fernandez.

Erma J. Pyles, Larry L. and Betty Jackson, Lyle L. and Alice Jackson and Lionel E. and Judy Jackson to Marvin R. and Martina Urban, of Thomas County, Lots 15 and 16, Block 48, Second Addition to the City of Goodland.

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