

## Marty Had a Little Lamb

It was lambing season. The neighbors' phone call brought my dad and me rushing to their barn<sup>1)</sup> to help with a difficult delivery. We found a lamb whose mother had died while giving birth. The orphan<sup>2)</sup> was weak, cold, still shrouded with the placenta<sup>3)</sup>, and walking impossibly on tall and wobbly legs. I bundled him up in my coat and put him in the pickup truck for the short ride back to our small family farm in rural Idaho.

We drove through our barnyard, passing cows, pigs, chickens, dogs and cats, but Dad headed straight for the house. I didn't know it yet, but that lamb was destined to become more than an ordinary sheep, just as I was destined to become more than an ordinary seven-year-old boy—I was about to become a mommy.

Cradling<sup>4)</sup> the lamb in my arms, I brought him into the kitchen. While Mom and I wiped the lamb down with dry towels, Dad stoked the furnace with coal so that the newborn would have warming heat to drive away the cold. As I petted his curly little head, the tiny creature tried sucking on my fingers. He was hungry. We slipped a nipple over a pop bottle full of warm milk and stuck it into his mouth. He latched on, and instantly his jaws pumped like a machine, sending the nourishing milk to his stomach.

As soon as he started eating, his tail started wagging furiously. Then suddenly his eyes popped open for the first time, and he looked me right in the eye. He gave me that miraculous moment—of—birth look that every mother knows. The look that says, unmistakably, “Hello Mommy. I'm yours, you're mine, ain't life fine.”

A young boy with tousled blond hair and thick black glasses doesn't look much like a sheep. But this little lamb didn't care in the least. The important thing was that he had a mom—me.

I named him Henry and, just like the nursery rhyme, everywhere that Marty went, the lamb was sure to go. The instant bond we shared that first day turned into the same deep kind of connection that develops between mother and child. We were always together. I'd feed, exercise and bathe Henry. I'd scold him sternly<sup>5)</sup> when he got out in the road. Imagine the amazement and delight of my classmates when I had a couple of dogs and a sheep run to meet me at the school bus. Every day after school, Henry and I played games together until we both fell asleep, side by side, in the tall cool grass of the pasture.

As I grew up, Henry grew older. Never once, however, did he forget that I was his mom. Even as a full-grown ram, he nuzzled me fondly, rubbing his big woolly head against my leg whenever he saw me. Functioning as a four-legged lawn mower<sup>6)</sup> and wool-covered dog at the Becker farm, Henry had a happy, healthy, full life for the rest of his days.

People sometimes ask me why I became a veterinarian. The answer is: Henry. At seven years old, my love for animals was still just a spark. But it ignited<sup>7)</sup> into a flame at that magical moment when I became a mother to a hungry little lamb.

□by Marty Becker

## 马蒂有只小羊羔

那是母羊产仔的季节。邻居打电话说有只羊难产，我跟爸爸便匆忙赶往他们家谷仓。待我们赶到时，羊妈妈已在生产时死掉了，剩下这只孤零零的小羊羔又冷又弱，还裹着胎盘，靠那细长孱弱的四肢简直无法走动。我用上衣裹起它，放在小卡车里，我们走捷径驶回我们在爱达荷州乡下的小农场。

我们开过场院，撇下牛、猪、鸡、狗和猫，爸爸照直朝我们的房子开去。我当时还不知道，命运安排那小羊羔要成为一只不寻常的羊；而我也只是个寻常的7岁孩童---我注定要当它的妈妈。

我抱着小羊走进厨房。我和妈妈用干毛巾擦拭着它，爸爸往炉子里添煤，让炉火给新生的小东西驱寒。我轻轻拍它一头卷毛的小脑袋时，小家伙竟试着嘬我的手指。它饿极了。我们赶忙在装满温牛奶的汽水瓶上塞上奶嘴，送进它嘴里。它一口咬住，叭嗒着嘴吮吮起来，滋养的奶汁流进了体内。

它一开始吃奶，尾巴就使劲地晃动。突然间它第一次睁开了眼睛，盯着我看。每个妈妈都知道生命诞生那一刻奇迹般的眼光。没错，那目光是“你好，妈妈。我是你的，你属于我，生活真美好，不是吗？”

一个长着乱蓬蓬的亚麻色头发、带着黑框深度眼镜的小男孩不会像只绵羊，可是那小羊羔一点也不在乎。重要的是它有了个妈妈---那就是我。

我管它叫亨利。就像儿歌唱的那样，马蒂走到哪儿，羊羔就跟到哪儿。见面第一天我们之间形成的亲密关系就像母子那般。我们俩总是形影不离。我喂它吃饭，带它活动，给它洗澡。它要是跑到路上去，我就严厉地斥责它。当我的同学们看见几只狗和一头羊跑到校车处迎接我，你们可以想像他们的惊讶和喜悦。每天放学以后，我和亨利都一起戏耍，直玩到我们俩累得并排躺在牧场上阴凉茂盛的草地上睡着为止。

我长大了，亨利也越来越老了，可他从未忘记我是它妈妈。即使已经是头大公羊，只要一见到我，它还是亲热地用鼻子拱我，用它那毛茸茸的大脑袋蹭我的腿。亨利在我们家农场上既是只四条腿的刈草机，又是只长着羊毛的看家狗。亨利的余生过得幸福、健康和充实。有时人们问我为什么当上了兽医。我的回答是：因为亨利。7岁时，我对动物的爱还只是个火花，但在我成为一只饥饿的小羊羔的妈妈那一奇迹般的时刻，那火花霎时燃成一团火焰。

## NOTE 注释：

barn [bɑ:n] n. [农]谷仓，畜棚

orphan ['ɔ:fən] n. 孤儿，失去生母的幼小动物

placenta [plə'sentə] n. 胎盘，胎座

cradle ['kreɪdl] vt. 将...放在摇篮内

sternly [stɜ:nli] adv. 严厉地，苛刻地，坚决地

mower ['məʊə] n. 割草机

ignite [ɪg'nait] v. 点火，点燃