



STAR BOARDER

by june weaver

I was awakened by the clatter of pots and pans in the kitchen. It was 1:00 A.M. Stumbling through the dark hall I hoped to get to the kitchen before it was a complete shambles.

I had no worry that it might be a burglar, or one of the kids foraging for a midnight snack. I knew for certain that it was Lucky, our star boarder—a raccoon. Any hour is dinner hour for a raccoon.

The amount of food he eats I don't mind—but the mess he makes while deciding which tidbit to choose is a nightmare.

One such incident resulted in a five pound sack of sugar becoming mysteriously mixed with rice, honey and butter. Lucky spread this on the drainboard, floor and stove. Then, leaving the cupboard bare, he curled up in a corner to sleep.

In the eight short months Lucky has been with us, he has moved into our hearts, our pocketbooks and our time. He is both lovable and fearsome, creating havoc wherever he goes. And like a child, he has to be watched most of the time.

He has cultivated many people habits, such as sleeping at night and playing days with our five boys whenever he can coax, cajole or tease them into playing distance. Like a spring which never unwinds, he lives to play and plays to live.

His dearest friend is a huge pepper tree. His first view of the world from the top of this tree thrilled him, as he scampered from branch to branch, hung by his back legs, bounded to the upper-

most branch, and, holding on with all four of his armlike legs, let the wind rock him back and forth while he chattered loudly. Then, head first in a mad dash, he scampered to the ground only to shoot back up the tree again.

After securely establishing this friendship, he chose the tree for his cat naps, pouting place and platform from danger.

Next to playing, Lucky loves to ride in the car. Sitting astride the front door window frame, with ears flattened in the wind, he views the world from this precarious perch. I believe he gets a chuckle from seeing the furor he creates in each passerby who sees him.

He loves to go to the park and can scent it when we are within a mile of it. There's a goldfish pond there in which are moss and snails—a great delicacy to Lucky. As yet, he hasn't bothered the fish, but he loves to chase the ducks which gather in great droves on the banks of the park lagoon. A pelican has him buffaloed though, and some swans hiss and keep him at bay.

Once a week we drive to the hills. Lucky, accompanying us without a leash, breathes deeply of the air, and, with awesome intensesness, examines every rock and crevice. Every gopher hole on each hill receives his questioning little hand. I'm sure he hasn't heard that there are rattlesnakes and scorpions in Arizona. No doubt he would try to make friends should he meet one.

Lucky's favorite food is puppy meal, his favorite bed—our eldest son's. He's really just one of the boys—our sixth child. ►