



Bill Boggs poses with the original Spike, an English bull terrier that sometimes appeared on his High Point-based talk show, "Southern Exposure With Bill Boggs," during the 1970s. SPECIAL | HPE

Former TV host Bill Boggs writes book inspired by his days in High Point



BY JIMMY TOMLIN
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

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HIGH POINT — Depending on their age, High Pointers may or may not remember talk-show host Bill Boggs from the early 1970s, but one thing is for sure — Boggs never forgot High Point.

Boggs, 77, hosted WGHP’s “Southern Exposure With Bill Boggs,” a popular morning talk show that featured interviews with celebrities passing through the Triad. The syndicated show aired from the spring of 1972 until December 1974, when Boggs left for greater fame in New York City.

Now, more than 45 years later, Boggs has published a comedic novel, much of which is based on his experiences in High Point. Today is the official release date for the book, titled “The Adventures of Spike the Wonder Dog” (Post Hill Press, \$25).

“The first third of the book is set in High Point and Thomasville, where I lived with Spike the Wonder Dog,” Boggs said during a telephone interview from his home in Palm Beach, Florida. “How often do novels get written that are set in High Point and Thomasville?”

According to Boggs, the novel was inspired by a real dog named Spike, an English bull terrier that actually appeared with him on “Southern Exposure” from time to time and had a penchant for stealing the show.

“I just brought him on for fun one day, and he was kind of a natural clown,” Boggs said. “He would yawn or roll over and fall asleep — or sometimes even get up and walk away — at funny times during the show. Spike the Wonder Dog became a very popular character, and he even got fan mail. Unfortunately, Spike was hit and killed by a drunk driver shortly before I left for New York City.”

Three years ago, after a long, successful career in television, Boggs decided to turn his attention to writing, and Spike popped into his head.

“That dog was so much a fixture in my life,” Boggs said. “So I started thinking, ‘What if Spike hadn’t gotten killed and had come with me to New York in today’s

world of social media and become a huge TV star and social media star?’ I sat down to write it, and the voice of Spike the Wonder Dog started to flow through me. Within one hour of writing, I knew I had something special, because I had a voice I’d never written in or spoken in.”

Spike has a sardonic, often politically incorrect sense of humor that pokes fun at human foibles. He rockets to TV and internet fame after appearing on “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” with his master, Bud, who hosts a local morning show in High Point. Together, their fame explodes when Bud signs on for a talk show in New York City, but Spike becomes such a celebrity that evil forces plot to kidnap him, and he has to figure out how to survive on his own.

The novel has received positive advance reviews, including high praise from no less than Winston Groom — the author of “Forrest Gump” — who describes the hook as “highly original and hilarious satire.”

Boggs looks back with fondness at his short stint in High Point. “Southern Exposure” gave him the opportunity to interview a wide variety of celebrities, from David Cassidy and Charles Kuralt to The Jackson 5 and Sonny and Cher. Also while in High Point, he hosted “The Late Bill Boggs,” a late-night show that featured progressive programming on such topics as massage parlors and marijuana.

Those shows gave Boggs invaluable experience for his move to New York City, he said.

“I had my own show in New York for 13 years,” he said, “but I always felt like the root and development of my talent was based on what I did and learned in High Point.”

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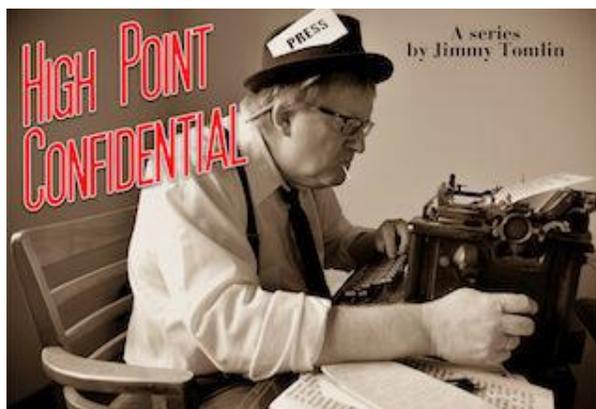
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Phone: 336-888-3500

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