



Cats

& Dogs



... & Geese

By M. David Feld

It's about 8 a.m. in Mission Lake, Missouri. Marianne Lumpe is putting a life vest on Boo, her beautiful Border collie with a pure white face, black body hair, white boots, a black tail with a white tip, one black ear and one white ear, both standing straight up. Her vest is a shocking pink.

Marianne is Boo's guardian. Boo is the heroine of Mission Lake.

Consisting primarily of retired residents, Mission Lake is a community with approximately 250 homes. Next to the 14-acre lake sits a clubhouse and pool, along with an engraved wooden sign that reads "Don't Feed the Geese" with the words "on this Side of the Lake" blacked out.

Milo Moses, a 10-lb rescued tom-

cat, lives with Boo and Marianne. Boo and Milo Moses have just finished their morning playtime ritual. Actually Boo thinks she is herding Milo Moses. But, Milo Moses has it all figured out. He lies in the middle of the living room carpet, rolls on his back and waits for Boo to spot him. Once Milo Moses is in sight, Boo crouches like a tiger and slowly inches towards the sly cat until she is about a dog length away. But Milo Moses just lays frozen, tormenting Boo, who can't understand why this cat isn't scampering. Boo's hope is that Marianne comes soon with the vest ... she knows she will have better luck with the geese.

Peacefeul Community...at War

Last year, the peaceful community of Mission Lake was at war with itself

over what to do about the large number of Canada geese that were leaving large droppings by their pool, on their walks, in yards and destroying their lawns. Many residents believed that the overabundance of algae forming in the lake was a direct result of the organic nutrients found in geese feces. On the other hand, many residents liked the geese, and welcomed the presence of wildlife in an otherwise sterile urban environment. Thus began the heated debate over what to do about the "geese problem."

Geese have been known to be great grass mowing machines. Although, as a result of their hearty appetities, primarily eating grass, the geese leave behind about one-and-a-half pounds of droppings a day. Scientific tests have found that although the droppings contain e-coli, these strains are not harmful to humans.

The proposed community solution was to wait for the geese to molt (the periodic shedding of their feathers which prevents them from flying) and then hire a pest control company to round-up the geese and goslings, place them in small crates and truck them hundreds of miles to be killed and processed for food. But Marianne knew there had to be a more humane way to deal with the problem. That's where we, GeesePeace, come in.

Calling for Help

GeesePeace was founded three years ago. Co-founder Holly Hazard is DDAL's Executive Director. The Humane Society of the United States, the Fund for Animals, and Delaware Action for Animals have become GeesePeace partners. And because GeesePeace programs have been so successful, the USDA Wildlife Services, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife agencies have been encouraging communities to give GeesePeace a try.

It was late one Friday evening when I received a call from Marianne. She had been searching the Internet for a solution that would save the geese at Mission Lake from a senseless and cruel death. For her and many others in the community, killing the geese was unacceptable, and they were determined to stop the slaughter. I told Marianne that the problem she is facing in Mission Lake is occurring in most communities where geese have become residents rather than joining their migrating cousins. I advised her that the first step was to

recognize that the perceived problems are real and that she needed to be part of the solution ... a humane solution ... to turn controversy into cooperation. First I explained why round-ups do not work (other geese come to occupy the void), and that there are sure-fire solutions that do work and have been successful in every community GeesePeace has assisted over the last two years. I suggested that to get the ball rolling, she must first ask the Mission Lake Board of Directors to invite GeesePeace to present its strategy to the community. Encouraging cooperation over confrontation

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would create a stronger and prouder community, resulting in a united Mission Lake community without a Canada geese problem.

Presenting Solutions

Marianne contacted the Board president and arranged for GeesePeace to make its presentation. Key recommendations included:

Step 1: Stop the controversy by taking the lethal option off the solution table.

Step 2: Implement a humane Canada geese population stabilization program through egg addling, using protocols developed by HSUS. This strategy is similar to spaying and neutering.

Step 3: Modify the habitat through strategic landscaping and introduce a Border collie to deny land and water access to the Geese.

Marianne committed to implement a GeesePeace program. The community overwhelmingly voted in favor of GeesePeace, rather than sink into debilitating controversy. Now in its second year of a successful

GeesePeace program, Marianne has been elected to the community's Board of Directors. Mission Lake no longer has a Canada geese problem.

Adopting Answers

Mission Lake is an example of the many communities across the U.S. that have adopted a GeesePeace program to humanely, without controversy, resolve its conflicts with Canada geese. There are currently programs in Kansas City; St. Louis; Boston; Northern Virginia; Maryland; Delaware; Rockford, IL; Brighton, NY (suburb of Rochester) and Raleigh, NC.

Even 'Boo' Gets a Job

Milo Moses looks disappointed as Marianne tightens the life vest on Boo. She leads a happy dog out to herd geese from Mission Lake. As Boo approaches, the geese begin their honking, spreading the word that Boo is back. As Boo crouches and gets set to enter the water, the geese know it's time to go. First, one goose takes flight. Then in unison the other geese take flight. In seconds they form a perfect V formation heading towards another lake, pond or river that provide them sanctuary. Some begin a molt migration back to Canada.

A happy Milo Moses is looking out the window knowing Boo will soon be returning home. And Boo thinks maybe Milo Moses is more fun than the geese after all and heads home. 🐾

David Feld is President and co-founder of GeesePeace. David began his career as a professional engineer specializing in water resources. He has been a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya, Chief of Operations Research and Systems Development for the USDA Rural Housing Service, and Virginia State Engineer for USDA's Farmers Home Administration. David is currently on temporary leave from FPS Solutions (Fast Practical Software) to lead the national GeesePeace program.