

Sarah Kiser, Associate Editor

Did you ever notice that we don't have flocks of monstrous geese on campus? In the past, goose droppings on our sidewalks became an increasing problem. "We were spending a tremendous amount of time and effort removing goose poop from the sidewalks," said Grounds Manager Aaron Schettler. But no longer. As alumnae may remember, that was thanks to none other than Goose Dog and Mr. Schettler.

As grounds manager, Schettler has multiple duties, one of which used to be goose chasing. In fact, Meredith chosen dogs used to be picked from professors' pets. "I started inviting professors to bring their dogs to campus. I would train their dog and we would chase geese."

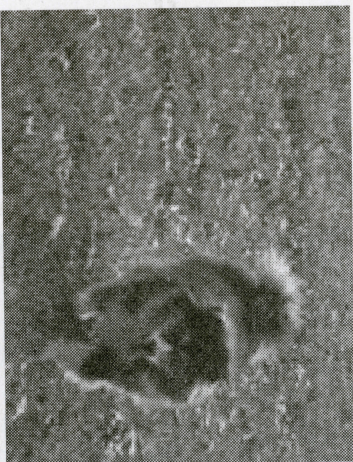
"I had golden retrievers or Australian shepherds," said Schettler. "Dogs are natural predators for geese. If you've got a flock of geese on campus...if you study them, there's a couple geese who are looking out for threats... The geese see the dog and the 'look-out goose' would start to signal... They would watch the dog, and if the dog showed them any attention at all, then the geese would take off."

Dr. Brent Pitts Lacy, an older Australian shepherd mix, is an experienced goose chaser. "She is a great, affectionate dog," said Schettler. "She was my most reliable goose chaser." Lacy has the instinct to herd and chase. Schettler 'interviewed' a young, "rambunctious" golden retriever, but decided "the trick was to have a dog that would respond and be able to work off leash."

Lacy was the Goose Dog for two years. Of her age Pitts said, "She had two other homes before ours. She may be 14, but we've been saying 14 for four years now! She is getting tottery now in her old age."

According to Pitts, Lacy “enjoyed coming to campus and meeting everyone here. Many people still remember her and ask about her, even today. She was the goose dog for many months, but I have to say I never saw her chase a goose on campus. I think she just liked hanging out on campus and riding in Aaron Schettler’s Gator!”

Three years ago the facilities department began contracting with a local company, Goose Masters, who will routinely bring their own Border Collie to serve as a guest Goose



Lacy, on the job in the heat of the chase
Photo courtesy of Dr. Brent Pitts

Dog. The new Goose Dog can still be seen on campus. "This time of year they come daily," said Schettler, who explained that flocks are flying south this time of year and are looking for places to nest. For example, "If we see a flock of geese in front of the oaks apartment, I text the local guy who has several accounts in our area...then he says, 'I'll be there in 20 minutes.'"

With the geese chasing occurring on a regular basis Shettler says, "The geese pretty much know the...dance. They see the car, then the dog hops out. The dog might run 10 steps in their direction then they take off."

But don't worry, the grounds manager insists that no harm comes

to the geese during the chasing. "It is a simple strategy that's not considered cruel," added Schettler. "It's using the natural system."

Goose Masters will sometimes have to follow a flock all the way down to the amphitheatre, recounted Schettler. Then the dog will get them out of the lake. In the end, according to Shettler, "The geese are fairly smart. They see the dance. They go through the motions." The geese know that the amount of energy gained from eating this grass is not worth the energy it takes to avoid the fearsome Goose Dog.



Lacy on the front stoop, her favorite spot. Taken recently. Photo courtesy of Dr. Brent Pitts

STAFF