

## **A BORDER COLLIE OF OUR VERY OWN**

**by Marie Coady**

**Fall is approaching and as bears get ready for a long winter's nap, birds begin to map out their route south. Except, of course, the geese who congregate on the shores around Horn Pond. Woburn's geese have no intention of leaving their goose that laid their golden egg; the well-meaning locals who feed them year round. Instead, like predatory street gangs they surround and harass anyone approaching with anything that resembles food.**

**It's ironic that while walkers, joggers and bikers peer through the chained link fence surrounding the old pump house like kids looking in a candy store window, the geese give each other secret high-fives as they stride cockily in front of the pump house, leaving behind a trail of droppings that no pet being walked by its owner could ever hope to equal.**

**The reason given for the closure of the area around the pump house is to protect the water supply, and who among us is against that? It's just that it seems inconsistent to allow the droppings of local geese to pile up around the pump house while humans take the long and less picturesque route alongside the power plant.**

**Well, there may be a perfect solution that will please everyone. She works cheap and even puts in overtime without asking for time and a half. Her name is Tess, and she came to the public's attention when she appeared pictured in living color on the pages of the Boston Globe last year, guarding the shores of Horn Pond from nesting geese. As a matter of fact, "chicks and ducks and geese better scurry" when Tess comes-a-running.**

**Unfortunately, as it turns out Tess was only on loan at Horn Pond for a picture taking opportunity. In reality Tess, the Border Collie, lives at the Winchester Country Club with her proud owner, golf course superintendent Dan Higgins. Before Dan recruited Tess, Border Collies were used exclusively by ranchers to herd sheep and cattle, but Dan had read that greens keepers were using Border Collies to herd Canada geese off the golf course and keep their mega-bucks paying members from sliding around in goose droppings.**

**Now Tess herds geese for Dan at Winchester, keeping them from nesting and producing another gaggle of geese. As Dan says, "All you have to say to her is, 'Tess, go get geese', and she takes off sprinting across the greens and through the rough to keep them from nesting around the club's pond." This year there was only one nesting pair at the club's pond compared to dozens last year.**

**Tess makes the rounds with Dan everyday and gets restless in winter when there isn't enough work for her to do. She has a sterling work ethic. Last winter, after Tess had pulled some muscles in her leg and was ordered to rest, Dan had to tie her up inside the house to keep her from leaping out a door or window to be with him on his rounds. Like any great athlete, Tess doesn't like to be left off the work roster even when she is hurting.**

**Owning a dog like Tess is a great responsibility and that's probably why it wouldn't work in Woburn. One person would have to take responsibility for her care and feeding, because Tess is more than a work horse, she's a real pal. According to Dan, "I almost forgot what having a dog was like until Tess came along. Now I can't imagine life without her."**

**Like Winchester Country Club before Tess, Woburn certainly has more Canada geese than it can handle. Pretty soon they'll be taking over our parks and recreation areas and their droppings are not only messy, they can make you sick. Goose droppings carry E-coli. Since none of us would want the geese flock to be thinned out by one big duck hunt and have geese carcasses littering the shores of Horn Pond, maybe Woburn should think about getting their very own version of Tess. Of course, you'd need an owner who has a lot of energy, a love for animals, and a commitment to depleting the geese flock in a humane manner.**

**The reality is that as long as we keep feeding them, word will spread through the goose world that there is free food and plenty of it in Woburn, and the geese will keep coming, raising large, healthy families and taking over parks, golf courses and ponds. It seems more humane to thin out our herd of honking, squawking, pecking, scary geese by keeping them from nesting at Horn Pond and other Woburn water sheds. Then maybe they'll get the hint and fly south.**

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