

Photos courtesy of Paul Desmarais, Greenwich (Conn.) Times

Border collie rids course of irksome geese

By MARK LESLIE

There have been dog super-heroes in the past. Timmy's Lassie... Rusty's Rin Tin Tin... Sergeant Preston's King... But today, in Greenwich, Conn., the Dog of the Hour is Richard Marcks' Tac, who accomplished what no human in town could do: He drove several hundred geese to a new address — out of town. A seven-year-old border collie, Tac (short for Sharp as a



Tac) has ridded Fairview Country Club of 600 troublesome geese — and enjoyed every minute of it.

"This is the hottest thing since peanut butter," said Marcks, property manager at Fairview.

Twelve other area golf courses have bought border collies to rid their properties of geese since seeing Tac at work.

Buying the trained dog was Marcks' brainchild. "Within a month we had the course clean," Marcks said.

Tac, fully trained to herd sheep, took quickly to the geese. Since she loves water, it was no chore for her to swim into the waterways and fetch the flock toward Marcks. Once the geese were brought in tight to him, they flew off.

"After you harass them a few times they leave," he said.

The \$2,000 price tag, Marcks said, "sounds like a lot, but you spend more than that in maintenance and cleanup [of geese]."

Tac and Marcks have gone out on the speakers circuit, demonstrating how they gave the ex-resident geese a new address.

Among the new converts to the Border Collie Remedy are Tamarack, Redding and Sterling Farms country clubs, and Scarsdale and Richter Park golf clubs. Westchester County's Parks and Recreation Department is buying two dogs for its five courses and The Hampshire Club has just ordered one, Marcks said.

"Many superintendents have tried other kinds of dogs but they don't listen well," said Marcks. "The border collies are trained to respond to voice and hand commands and to a whistle.

"Geese will drown a dog. But when a border collie gets in trouble, you can just call them back out of the water."

The Connecticut and New York clubs have been buying the dogs fully trained from a woman in Shipman, Va., who has 25 dogs in her kennel. With so many sales to golf courses, she now trains them on geese as well as sheep.

Marcks said it costs him \$1,000 a year to keep Tac. As well as good workers, border collies make "great companions," he said. "She rides with me on the golf car. And the public relations with the membership is great. They all want to stop and talk to the dog. There's no greater ice-breaker."

Marcks has already prepared for the future, Tac giving birth to pups seven months ago.

"Training him can be a little bit of a pain," Marcks conceded. But cleaning up for geese can virtually be torment.



Tac goes in after the geese assembled at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, Conn.

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