

Most of my serious duck hunting for the last 10 years has been at the Currituck Sound with a third generation guide by the name of Grover Cleveland Sawyer III. He has a "legacy blind" that has been passed down from father to son with no actual ownership of the involved land. Landowners have had their influence and he will not be able to move the ownership to his now 4-year-old daughter.

The largest landowner in the county, Earl Slick, controls impoundments all over the territory we gun in, the closest being some 800 yards from Clevie's blind. Every morning, some 20,000 pintails, greenwing teal and Canada geese pour into that area. We don't always kill ducks, but we do get the show. Waterfowl will pour in and out of that 30-acre impoundment and another some 2,000 yards from us. If there isn't the right wind or conditions to kill ducks, you have a full day of bird watching.

The blind is off the bank of a small island with difficult walking and thick clump of a hard marsh grass that makes finding downed ducks nearly impossible. Clevie's last dog died back in the 80's. One of my Wrightsville friends, who hunted with Clevie for the first time this year, has a nice, big, mild mannered yellow lab that just sired puppies. Three of us chipped in for the black male the Sawyer family decided on and the weekend Duke was to lose and Carolina win, Tom Lynch and I left Wilmington with a 7-week-old puppy.

Lynch picked me up at the Merrill Lynch office in Wilmington. Four women who normally pay me little to no attention piled out into the parking lot to ooh and ah over this thing that will hopefully grow to be a working dog. Off we went on a 4-½ hour drive that saw the dog start howling after 30 minutes. Actually, he was pretty good overall. I only came close to tossing him out the window two or three times. We wondered if he was guaranteed for any length of time so we could get our money back and how we would explain something that small leaping out the window when it was rolled down for some reason we would have to invent later.

Tom is one of the most laid back, country mannered people you could ever meet. With a voice like Sam Erwin, he has an endless array of jokes and stories that is usually being added to any time you go anywhere with him whether it be hunting, fishing, golf, beach or bars. He actually excels at bars so we have a lot in common. He's about 6'4" and a couple of stone overweight so when we pulled up into a doctor's office with a grassy lawn and he started to frolic with the puppy by skipping backwards, there was probably more than one nose pressed against the window.

Into the Sawyer compound we finally drove where Clevie's wife and daughter of course fell immediately in love with "Jag"(yes, our gun dog is named after a prime time soap opera.) The first thing I notice and immediately ask is, "Where's Goosey Goose?"

Goosey Goose was a gray domestic goose that had been one of five on the two-acre pond behind Clevie's house. The brethren had all been taken by predators save Goosey, who Clevie aptly called a "survivor." Obviously as geese go Goosey was a virtual Einstein. I had known Goosey for years. I do not know exactly how many because most of my trips to Currituck are spent in hard weather in a blood lust drunken stupor. I know I killed a mountable pintail two years ago and a widgeon three years before that. The Thomas brothers and I saved the East Coast from a teal invasion during the ice storm the year before the widgeon and so on but none of those references involve Goosey. Last year, I staggered by Goosey under the weight of two of her Canadian cousins. She paid no heed and that may have contributed to her undoing.

Well, we had some hard weather at the end of the duck season of '00. That is a whole 'nother story that starts with the luck of the Good Samaritan. After duck season, the back of Currituck sound filled up with black heads (scaup) and teal. Clevie's pond was covered with ducks, including a bunch of Canada's.

People who are opposed of hunting often cite that it is cruel to kill geese because they mate for life. Like most anti hunting diatribes that is not true. They mate for a year at a time but even this serial monogamy ain't. One of the Canadas impregnated the formerly virtouse Goosey Goose while his slut of a wife watched.

This group of out-of-towners shows up and corrupts the smartest goose on Sawyer estates with God only knows what kind of talk and actions, then they leave with Goosey Goose building the nest. Well, the night before we showed up with the dog, a coon or fox got took advantage old Goosey Goose's inexperienced maternal instincts. We saw the broken eggs and a whole lot of feathers. Hanging out with the wrong kind and mixed breeding got the best of her.

Now it is easy to read divine intervention in this story. If we had not shown up with that dog when we did, Anna Sawyer would have been heart broken over the demise of Goosey Goose. As best I can tell, the only one who gave a rats ass about the goose was me but I was pretty down on the dog when we got there. The real moral to the story comes on our trip home, though. We were having dinner in Elizabeth City at Mulligan's, a fine establishment on the Inter Coastal Waterway reminiscent of Wrightsville's Dockside. Mulligans will soon have tee shirts and can holders thanks to good old RU LTD? It is 40 minutes from the Sawyers, so Tom and I were looking for a motel that night. The manager hooked us up and at some time on Saturday night, two country boys from Wrightsville Beach pulled into the headquarters of the state convention of the North Carolina Coalition of Negro Women. Goosey Goose's fatal lesson was fresh in our minds and for once in our lives, we avoided the bar, snuck straight to the room and passed out. We did get a picture the next day but as far as I know, Lynch lost the camera.