



# SPOTLIGHT ON RESCUE

by: Carol Allen, Chair  
 National Rescue Committee  
 (315) 469-7926  
 E-mail: carosal@twcny.rr.com

## A Rescue Pioneer Retires

by Jane Moore

Golden Retriever Rescue Club of Charlotte announced in their October/November newsletter the retirement of their chairperson, Kathy Nixon. Kathy has been active in rescue for over 13 years in the Charlotte area, and the club will certainly feel the loss. "We are all sorry to see Kathy leave the area, and our club will not be the same without her. We all wish Kathy the very best in her new endeavor." Kathy leaves a well-established club with a large membership base.

Kathy's introduction to Golden Retriever rescue began many years ago when she read a newspaper ad that caught her attention. In 1989 she had her first encounter with a Golden Retriever puppy named "Dusty." She had given her husband Ed a puppy for Christmas. Within two months Kathy had talked her husband into another puppy (by this time Kathy was hooked on Golden Retrievers). If two puppies weren't enough, she began searching for another puppy; that's when she found the newspaper ad that changed her future and that of many Golden Retrievers. The add read "Adopt A Rescue Golden Retriever." The local breed club, she discovered, was active in rescue. Kathy became a member, attended meetings, went to shelters, learned how to groom and helped out whenever and wherever she was needed. Kathy credits her mentor, Fran Carr, for her training and education, both with rescue and the breed. After her first busy year, she was voted in as "Rescue Chairperson." Kathy laughs when she tells about accepting the role. There had been only 27 Golden Retrievers rescued from 1985 until 1990,



**Kathy Nixon with Max. She adopted Max after he was hit by a car and the owners wanted him euthanized. He is now seven years old.**

so it didn't seem like too much work (so what was the big deal?)! Kathy goes on to say that the first adoption contract was very simple: dog had to be spayed or neutered; owner had to provide proper care for the dog; establish contact with a veterinarian and to notify them if the dog was not working out.

The first year Kathy was chairperson, 42 Golden Retrievers were rescued and found homes through the club. She recalls one of her first fundraisers was a small group of volunteers cooking hot dogs and hamburgers all day long at a dog show. The total amount made that day was \$100. More fundraisers, more dogs and more help from volunteers was needed. It was not as simple as she first thought. Rescue was her full-time job.

In the early nineties Golden Retriever Rescue Club of Charlotte was formed as a stand-alone rescue. They applied for a grant from GRCA and The Committee to Assist Rescue. The funds were approved along with several recommendations on how to use the funds, revising their forms and medical suggestions. They applied for their non-profit status with the IRS, which Kathy says is one of the best things they did to increase donations from the public. People were willing to give more money knowing that it would be a tax deduction. They continued to grow from a small volunteer group of eight to 25 active volunteers. They implemented a new adoption program. Kathy laughs when she was told that it was harder to adopt a Golden Retriever than to adopt a child.

A kennel was built and opened April 1, 1996. Kathy talked her husband into building a kennel on their property to house the foster dogs for GRRCC. She remembers the grand opening and how excited everyone was. It was a bitter-sweet time for her. Dusty, her first Golden Retriever, died only two days before from allergies he suffered most of his life. She made a promise to Dusty that she would continue to help Golden Retrievers and educate people in his memory.

As GRRCC continued to grow, a newsletter and web site were developed. The newsletter, *Golden Moments*, is sent to a large database. They have a strong Board of seven members with John Duncan as their current President. GRRCC rescues 60-80 Golden Retrievers each year. Every Golden entering their program is given the finest medical care

possible.

Many of the 700-plus Golden Retrievers that came into GRRCC were near perfect; but some came with aggression, some were storm phobic, some could not be saved and some had major health problems. A very special Golden by the name of "Casey" came into the program in 1997. This one dog would have a ripple effect for many years to come. The story of Casey began when Kathy received a call from an owner that could not keep their Golden. The owner could not wait for Kathy to pick the dog up, so Casey was taken to the local shelter. GRRCC was again contacted and Casey was taken to the kennel. Casey became a candidate for U.S. Customs and was accepted into their training program. It was discovered that he had severe hip dysplasia when he started limping during his heavy training program. Casey was returned to Kathy and GRRCC. A massive fund-raiser went into full gear for his orthopedic surgery (seldom done by rescues in those days due to the high cost). The response to Casey's Miracle Fund was unbelievable. Casey had his surgery and money not used on his surgery and medical requirements stayed in the Casey's Miracle Fund to help other Golden Retrievers with special and expensive medical needs.

Casey recovered in the kennel for seven months, and then it was time to find the perfect home. At the same time more and more people were accessing the Internet. A dog in North Carolina could be seen by a person in New York City. This was all new to GRRCC and adoptions out of state were not done. It took a real sales pitch from Gail Lustig to talk Kathy into even thinking about sending Casey out of state, much less New York City. One major requirement in adopting from GRRCC was a fenced yard. Gail lived in Manhattan in a high rise – no fenced yard! But she owned a summer camp where Casey could have a lake to swim in and bags of tennis balls (plus tons of children). That was what tipped the scales...unlimited tennis balls. Casey became GRRCC's first in many things: first hip surgery; first out-of-state adoption and first time transporting a dog using several volunteers. Nancy Truesdale took Casey as far as Lynchburg, Virginia; he was picked up by Debbie Burroughs and driven to Washington, D.C., where Gail met Debbie and took Casey home to NYC. Gail

promised to stay in touch and she surely has been true to her word. Kathy states with great pride that one of the best parts of Casey's story is how Gail continues to repay because of her devotion to Casey. Many other Golden Retrievers, other breeds and rescue programs have all benefited from the support of The Goldstock Fund and the famous Goldstock Labor Day weekend held at Casey's summer camp. Casey's mark on rescue is felt by many others, both two-footed and four-footed.

A letter from a family that adopted a Golden from GRRCC and Kathy 10 years ago tells how they were touched by "Goebel." "We have been in California for one month. Goebel continues to get weaker. He shows no sign of pain, and he still lifts his head and wags his tail when you bend down to pet him. As I write this I know that he has lived a wonderful 14 years and his time is running out. Because of GRRCC and Kathy, a dog was given a good home and a family was given a great dog. I honestly believe that Goebel's life and my family's life were made better by us being brought together. I am sorry that it has taken me 10 years to write and tell you what a great thing you are doing." Goebel died with his grateful family by his side.

Kathy's dedication and hard work will continue through others that she has either touched by her helpful advice, her placement of a Golden or her many years involved in Golden Retriever Rescue in North Carolina.