

NOVEMBER 9, 1978

The pressure on dog owners over in Mertzson has been something fierce. Busy-body gardeners and softhearted cat lovers joined by folks who like sleep at night have made the harboring of the "Rovers" and "Tigers" a most tedious matter.

In my neighborhood, the per-capita number must run five or six dogs per family. On moonlight nights, the packs bay and howl so long and hard that overload switches are thrown on stereo equipment. The only citizens who get anything from the Johnny Carson show are the ones able to read lips. Along about midnight, it sounds like a casting for Jack London's "Call of the Wild".

My wife owns a heavyweight Collie dog that fills our quota. Every afternoon I walk him past blocks of Beagles and Dobermans and Poodles that range in the alleys and vacant lots, bristling for a fight or hungry for a chunk from my hind leg.

Being raised by an Indian woman has made the collie a natural fighter. I have to lead him on a chain, or he'd turn our walks into an open air pit battle that'd make a bulldog fancier switch from the pug noses to lap kittens.

We both have to be careful once we reach the highway. Right after we make our turn, an ex-banker owns a red birddog that bears a terrible resentment against pedestrians and Collies. Calling him a birddog isn't exactly correct. Mainly this red-haired fighter is a specialist in robbing chickens' nests and carrying on a custom breeding service for the whole town side. I'll leave it to you to say what kind of dog he is.

My banker friend calls him "Gus" which in my way of thinking is hardly adequate, considering all of his sidelines. The meanest girl that ever went to Mertzson High School was named "Blossom," so I don't put much store in the monikers that are hung on dogs and humans.

Week after week, Old Gus and the jugkeeper go around town like they've just been to a field trial or off to a big show. People stay so busy trying to dispose of red puppies that I guess they don't have time to check on their eggs. It's about the smoothest racket that can be run. They don't take in anything for stud fee, but I bet it doesn't cost four-bits a month to feed the dog.

One morning at the post office, they nearly went too far. Old Gus had egg yolk on his muzzle that stood out about like Miss Zsa Zsa Gabor would start out in a founders' day ceremony for the Colonial Dames.

I nearly went back to the house. An old lady had already asked where all those feathers came from in my front yard. We'd been together the last few days on a bull trade. The smartest lawyer in Texas couldn't have slipped another lie by that lady. Guilt by association, you know, is a dangerous game.

Mertzson is a good place to raise dogs and kids. In the sharpness of the fall, boys and dogs have a big playground to roam and explore.

Nights are a bit restless in the times of a full moon, but to date we still have enough roosters to crow up in the morning to get us up. I'm glad that the government doesn't check the town's egg production against the amount of puppies we have. Things are bad enough as it is.