

## STELLA BABY

In the summer of 1988, my wife and I drove to Hill High Orchard, Round Hill, Virginia to throw cracked corn to the wild ducks and geese, which were swimming in the large pond.

While walking along the banks of the pond, my wife saw a baby goose, or gosling, that had been abandoned by its mother. Geese are birds that spend the winter in the south and the summer in the north. Wild geese fly in V-shaped formation and are often called honkers because of the loud honking sound that the birds make as they fly. You can hear this clearly as a flock flies overhead. The male is called a gander and the female is called a goose and the young are goslings.



The baby we found was on the edge of the pond next to the water. She didn't



appear to have been injured but she clearly was puny. My wife picked her up and for some reason named the baby, "Stella Baby." My wife's mother first name is Stella and that probably had something to do with the naming of the baby gosling.

We took Stella home with us and put her in one of the portable tubs that we have on hand for the use of animals when they need water. My wife fixed the tub so that Stella Baby could have access to food and



water. Later, as Stella Baby grew in size, Evelyn, my wife, filled the larger tubs and a portable swimming pool with water as swimming was as important to Stella Baby's growth as food and water was important to her. Needless to say, Stella Baby was in bird heaven. She didn't seem to mind the strong amount of attention that she received from the Beagles who shared our home with us along with Stella Baby.

She looked upon my wife who took care of her as her Mother Goose . She followed my wife around the farm and when not following her she made constant use of the water in the portable pool and tubs. The pool could be heated and was heated in the cold weather.

We owned a 1984 Nissan Pickup Truck which my wife drove around the farm. As she became larger, Stella Baby would use her wings to help her keep up with the pickup. There was no stopping her. She started using her wings to fly to keep up with her adopted Mother Goose!!! After a few weeks of flying after the Nissan, she joined a flock of wild geese, which were flying overhead. The Beagles could not join their new playmate. We do not know how far that flock of geese flew that day but Stella Baby chose to return home from that flight. Eventually, however, she joined a flock of wild geese flying overhead and we assume she flew to Canada with them for the winter.

We never saw Stella Baby again but we will always treasure our memories of her and how she learned to fly by following her adopted Mother Goose in her Nissan Pickup Truck.

We treasure the memory of Stella Baby even more because of a 1996 movie "Fly Away Home" that told the story of concerned bird lovers who found a nest of many goose eggs and managed to raise the goslings. They built a small plane to assume the role of Mother Goose and safely led that flock to winter nesting



grounds. Without a leader to lead the flock, it most likely would have perished since none of the geese had ever been to the destination. Stella Baby was lucky that she found a flock that accepted her and allowed her to live as a proper goose.

Thank you, Stella Baby, for sharing our home for a short while and leaving us with such happy memories.