

## I Was Part of Nature

*by Hap Hansen*

I was on one of my frequent walks the other day, when a disturbance above and ahead of me caught my attention. As I looked skyward, a flock of Canada geese, flying in perfect V formation, were headed straight over my head. They never veered from their path as they passed directly above me, honking and squabbling. I wondered why they didn't change their course to avoid being that close to a human. Didn't they see me? Not likely. Did they sense I meant them no harm? Perhaps. Could they see I wasn't carrying a 12-gauge shotgun? I doubt it. No matter. I simply enjoyed a spectacular sight and for that moment, I was part of nature.

I also wondered why they honked continuously. Were they just passing the time of day? Perhaps they were arguing just whose turn it was to take the lead, breaking the wind and providing wing lift for all those who followed. Or maybe they were merely honking for the pure joy of being wild and free. No matter. The entire episode took no longer than 30 seconds. But afterwards I walked with a sprightlier gait, a spring in my step and a smile on my face. I had been allowed, for only a brief time to become part of an event that has been occurring for a millennium or longer; to be, in that moment, wild and free.

Thousands of Canada geese spend their winters in a nearby lake, taking off at dawn to feed in nearby fields and returning at dusk. Many more thousands head south in the fall and back in the spring. Many of them land on our golf course to eat the abundant grass. In golf season, the golf Pro uses dogs to chase them off the course so we golfers don't have to putt through goose poop! Several hours spent in a zoo could never replace the time on a chilly morning I spent alone with a V formation of wild Canada geese.

Already, hundreds of thousands of geese are heading for their traditional nesting grounds in a cycle that has repeated itself for thousands of years.

I'll be waiting watching and listening.