

The pet that Letterman would love

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Reporter

Wanted - One Texas A&M mascot. Must love the constant company of people. Free room and board. Travel. All medical expenses paid. National media attention. Excellent retirement benefits.

It's a dog's life? Not for Reveille V. First of all, it is doubtful whether she knows she is a dog. She probably thinks she is just another member of the corps. She is certainly the only member living in a coed dorm room.

I followed Reveille around the Texas A&M campus for a couple of days to see how the new mascot is handling her prominent position as the first lady of Texas A&M.

It's 6:10 a.m. Time for Reveille.

Hans Meinardus reaches to turn off the alarm clock as Reveille jumps out of the bottom bunk, stretches and yawns. Meinardus stumbles after her.

After dressing himself, Meinardus snaps Reveille's leash to her collar and they enter the hall to inspect the freshmen in Company E-2.

Reveille unknowingly complicates the lives of the freshman in her company by sitting on and scratching their painstakingly polished shoes. But they can't budge an inch to move her. After all, she is Reveille and they are lowly freshmen.

The members of Company E-2 now run outside to join the other outfits in the corps in formation on the quadrangle. However, for Reveille, first things are first, and nature calls.

With that order of business out of the way Reveille takes her place at the head of the outfit.

The companies report in that all are present and accounted for. Reveille's theme song is played, as well as "Colors." The American and Texas flags are raised. Reveille's ears obediently snap-to as the corps is called to attention.

A bird diving by catches Reveille's notice. By the inquisitive expression on her face, you know she yearns to chase after it. But the company is now marching to breakfast. Reveille yawns and trots toward Duncan Dining Hall.

What seems to be a noisy, bewildering situation, Reveille takes in stride without any trace of discomfort.

After all the pomp and ceremony of morning formation, Reveille is unceremoniously tied to the table leg after a quick search for a dropped tidbit.

She's out of luck.

"Howdy, Miss Reveille Ma'am," a freshman calls out as he addresses the mascot. This is the only way a freshman in the corps is allowed to speak to her. Reveille gives him the cold shoulder as she heads back towards her room and breakfast.

"She gets fed three times a day," Meinardus says.

She is being fed out of a Frisbee. Meinardus explains that he is trying to familiarize Reveille



Reveille V, the first lady of Texas A&M

with the disk so one day she will learn to catch it.

She will get five silver diamonds pinned to her maroon and white Texas A&M coat when she masters the technique. The corps commander has a four diamond insignia.

"That will make her a general," Meinardus says. "She got her corps brass (another insignia) when she was potty trained."

She has more than doubled her size since she first came to Texas A&M in December. But at

seven months she still has the face of a puppy and a long "Cadillac nose" that she has yet to grow into.

Little wads of gum are stuck in the tips of her ears so they will flop over and not stand up.

Reveille's A&M coat that she's almost outgrown is lying on a desk.

"My mom and I made that coat," Meinardus says.

Meinardus says neither he nor his mom knew what they were getting into when he was chosen

to care for the mascot during the summer of 1984 and his following sophomore year. Especially when Reveille had several accidents on his mother's Persian rugs while being potty trained during Christmas.

"Reveille V doesn't really get perturbed at anything," Meinardus says. "She is a real character."

Meinardus says that the new Reveille has a much better disposition and a spunkier character than Reveille IV.

Just about the only things she doesn't like are people who step on her toes and getting her tail brushed, Meinardus says.

"She has a mind of her own and is very mischievous," Meinardus says.

Of course these are not very unusual characteristics for a puppy. But all the attention that comes with being a mascot will affect the personality of even the best natured dog.

"She will become snobby. ...She knows she is on show when she has her coat on. She prances as if to say 'Here I am!'" Meinardus says.

Only the bottom bunk where Meinardus and Reveille sleep is made up. Meinardus says that sometimes he sleeps on the floor and Reveille sleeps on the bed. The bed is covered with a sheet and a sleeping bag. There is also a pillow and a homemade stuffed Reveille doll that was given to her as a present.

Reveille receives many presents from her admirers. She is quite a Southern belle. Mostly she gets chewies and bones. Some donate money to an endowment fund that is the source of revenue for Reveille's food, veterinarian and travel expenses.

Above Meinardus' desk there is a picture of his sister and three pictures of Reveille.

"I took Reveille with me on one or two dates," Meinardus says. Obviously, a girl would have stiff competition if she wished to date Meinardus.

Reveille is involved with almost everything the corp does. This includes football and basketball games that the corps attends, corps runs and all corps ceremonies.

Even when Reveille dies, she will not escape the shadow of Aggieland. She will be buried at the north end of Kyle Field, just outside the stadium's gates, where she will always be able to see the scoreboard. A corps member places a rose near each grave before the home games. When you are a Texas A&M mascot, you are a part of the school forever.

It's time to run errands and go to class. Reveille is feeling good and prances across campus with a grin spread across her face and her tongue rolling out of her mouth. She seems to know intuitively of the tradition she represents and what is expected of her. Students stop to greet and pet her. Meinardus says hello and introduces Reveille to each passerby who wants to meet her. Reveille sniffs her greeting. Together they continue their trek, leaving a wake of smiles.

Soon, the two friends will part company. It is time for Meinardus to choose a new handler for Reveille. She will stay with her new roommate during the summer and live with him during the 1985-86 school year.

"It's going to be like giving my kid away," Meinardus says as he looks away and then kneels down to hold Reveille's head in his hands. [^]E