



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAN DEAN



**Kiss me, you fool:** At right, Union Lake inhabitant Linda Mae Walker smooches one of her three pet snakes, the eight-foot-long, but not yet full grown, Julius Squeezer. Above, Julius — his friends call him that — demonstrates how snakes, which are completely deaf, sense their surroundings. They stick their tongues out.

# Snakes alive: 'Cheaper than a clown or a horse'

BY RALPH R. ECHEINAW  
STAFF WRITER

Question: What's 15 feet long, weighs 70 pounds, eats roosters whole and works for \$50 an hour?  
Answer: Samson, a not-yet-full-grown Indian python who works with Union Lake inhabitant Linda Mae Walker.  
Complementing this unusual entrepreneurial team are Julius Squeezer, an eight-foot box constrictor, and Jake, a five-foot bull python.  
Walker, 44, is working her way through Oakland Community College by "renting" these fearsome-looking, but harmless to

humanity, snakes around Oakland County to throwers of parties and raisers of funds.  
She accompanies the trio to all of its many gigs, entertaining children and adults alike, for the sum of \$60 per hour. "That's cheaper than a clown, or a horse," Walker revealed. (To hire Walker, call 360-2149.)  
Some of Walker's customers, she said, are frightened of her brood at first, but usually warm up to the snakes once that initial all-snakes-are-deadly, we're-all-gonna-be-killed feeling abates.  
She's even been taking them to Dublin Elementary in Union

Lake for a fund-raiser once a year since her odd business was launched in 1982.  
Walker acquired her first snake seven years ago when her then-boyfriend (later husband and ex-husband) presented her with Jake as a boffo Christmas gift.  
Like all of Walker's snakes, Jake enjoys curling himself

around human bodies to feel the 98.6-degree heat. "Sometimes I'll forget he's around my neck," Walker said. "One time I walked in a restaurant and forgot he was around my neck." Luckily, Walker was able to cover Jake with her coat and no one spotted him.  
But the real fascination of being a snake owner comes once

every two weeks when the snakes enjoy their bimonthly repast.  
Jake's a little guy compared to his mates, so he merely consumes mice that Walker buys at a pet store.  
Julius Squeezer has moved up to rats, but will soon outgrow them and eat meals fit for a well-darn big snake like Samson.

Walker acquires adult rabbits and roosters for the big guy's meal. She throws them in the cage and "they don't last very long." The python wraps his body around the prey and squeezes it to death, then unbinds his jaw and swallows it whole.  
"I usually have a bunch of people over when they eat," she said.

## Pigeon from page 5A

the foul odor wafting through the aforementioned refrigerated room.  
"Their feces drop down on the roof (and) it's a mess," he said. "It's a problem throughout the world. Pigeons are everywhere and they're messy."  
Pigeons can also be a health hazard, said Rikki Schwartz,

OU's environmental health and safety coordinator, who has become something of an excrement expert in the course of her pigeon research.  
Schwartz said that breathing the dust from pigeon waste products can cause two fungal diseases, although it's not exactly as contagious as the Bubonic Plague.

"I've got to believe it's very very rare," Schwartz said.  
But this isn't the first time OU has had a varmint problem. A few years ago biology professor George Gamboa had thousands of dollars of research destroyed when raccoons took an interest in his wasp nests.

"I came out one morning and half my colonies were gone," Gamboa said. "The second night the raccoons came and got the rest of the colonies."  
Gamboa's solution? He caught several raccoons, chauffeured them north and released the critters in the wilds of rural Oakland County.

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