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## THE BIG SPUR IN SPUR

### Tumbleweed Smith



Tumbleweed Smith

People who live in Spur, Texas have a lot of pride in their town. They are good neighbors and have respect for each other. They are good people. Spur has a population of around 1,200. The Dixie Dog, the town's only eating place, closed because of the pandemic. The closest place for travelers to get a meal is in Dickens, ten miles up the road. Dickens (population 300) is the county set of Dickens County.

Spur has a big homecoming every October for anybody who went to school in Spur. The city has an ex-students building filled with memorabilia. In the year 2000, Spur celebrated its 100th birthday. Harry Bob Martin, a member of the historical commission, approached John Grusendorf, owner of a welding shop, and asked him to build a big monument in the shape of a spur. John told Harry Bob that he could do it, that he just needed some time. This was in the spring of the year and they wanted it finished by the homecoming celebration.

"So we got started on it," says John. "Got through around the first of October. They came and picked it up and mounted it in concrete and had a big celebration and dedication as part of homecoming."

It's a metal structure 25 feet tall and 18 feet wide. It greets motorists as they come into town. At the time it was the tallest spur monument in Texas. It has since been eclipsed by a couple of others that are larger, but the one in Spur is authentic, designed by a local man who makes spurs. The dowel at the top of the big spur turns. John laid out the spur on the ground with stakes and ropes, then added the metal.

"The South Plains Electric Company brought a big trailer with a crane on it, hoisted that spur onto the trailer and drove it through town. At the site they dug big holes and stuck it in the ground I think ten or twelve feet, maybe more."

John created a piece of art, something he had never done before. Three of his employees and his wife Sylvia worked on the monument.

"About the last two months I stayed on it by myself." I asked John if he got paid for it.

"No, Sylvia and I donated the whole thing to the city. We enjoyed doing it. I did it for my grandkids and their kids so they can see what their old granddaddy did."

John had his welding shop nearly 40 years. He and Sylvia, who now live in Dickens, are traveling a lot these days.

"We were tied down for so many years running the shoo, but now we're trying to make up for it."

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# Colleen Hoover, Our Local Author, Is Absolutely Dominating the Bestseller List.



Five of Colleen Hoover's books are currently in Publishers Weekly's list of the top 10 best-sellers.

By Laura Miller

This has been the summer of Colleen Hoover, editing together clips of young women at the beach reading books by the Texas novelist. Furthermore, just a couple of months ago there was a Colleen Hoover spring and before that a Colleen Hoover winter and before that a Colleen Hoover fall. On any given week for more than a year now, the 42-year old Hoover has had three to six books on Publishers Weekly's top 10 best seller list. Currently three of the top five titles on the New York Times' combined print and 3-book fiction list are Hoover's. The most popular of these novels, *It Ends With Us*, isn't even new. It was published six years ago. A forthcoming sequel to that novel, *It Starts With Us*, will be published in October, its perch at the summit of both lists guaranteed.

Hoover-known as CoHo to her fans, who call themselves Cohorts -- is indeed the queen of BookTok, an adept TikToker herself, as well as the subject of countless videos in which young women appear clutching huge stacks of candy-colored CoHo paperbacks and proceed to rank their favorites among her 24 titles. But while Hoover might just be the ideal author to preside over TikTok, the platform is only the latest online

vehicle she has ridden to fame and fortune. She sometimes presents herself as surprised by her own virality, but Hoover has been a savvy self-promoter since 2012, when she distributed free copies of her first, self-published YA novel, *Slammed*, to influential book bloggers. She was big on BookTube (the YouTube book community) and big on "Bookstagram" well before TikTok came along. Furthermore, her story - social worker and mom transformed into blockbuster author via whatever new technology of the moment is ostensibly revolutionizing the book business - is catnip to traditional news outlets.

But a new technology can't make readers love a book. It can only persuade people to read it. What is it about Hoover's work that makes it so popular, so infectiously recommendable? Her novels do seem particularly well-suited to the currently ascendant Tiktok because the platform favors big, grabby displays of emotion, as opposed to the tasteful lifestyle curation of Instagram, formerly touted as the hot new way to sell books. CoHo fans on TikTok record themselves sobbing, screaming, gasping in astonishment, and pressing her books to their hearts in winsome displays of adoration. Often, actual words are superfluous to communicating the reader's response - in act, they may be more

of a hindrance than a help. Above all, BookTok conveys that Hoover's fiction delivers poser jolts of unadulterated feels.

Hoover's books are more varied than the work of many bestselling novelists. You pretty much know what you're getting when you grab a James Patterson thriller before boarding a long flight. But Hoover has written YA, romantic comedies, a ghost story, a gothic suspense novel, problem novels exploring such difficult issues as domestic violence and child sexual abuse, and steamy romances like *Ugly Love*, a novel about an affair between a nurse and an airline pilot that I estimate to be about 70 percent sex scenes. Not all of the Cohorts adore all of her books, but they've shown themselves to be willing to follow her into relatively uncharted territory and to appreciate what they find there.

Romance of one kind or another plays a role in every Hoover novel, and to judge by her TikTok fans, they speak to an audience with a well-developed awareness of the romance genre's established - not to say shopworn - tropes. The heroine of 2015's *November 9* is just such a reader, explaining to her love interest what qualities make a kiss "book-worthy" and informing him that she doesn't like stories featuring 'insta-love' (the central couple falls for each other madly on first sight). In *It Ends With Us*, Hoover presents Ryle, one third of a love triangle involving the heroine Lily, as a classic romance hero. He's handsome; has a glamorous, remunerative career as a neurosurgeon; is fantastic in bed and gallant outside of it; and can't stand up straight. Deploying all the fictional techniques used to make romance readers swoon over a male character, Hoover sets up Ryle's reluctance to commit as the main obstacle to Lily and Ryle's relationship. When they,

inevitably, overcome this and he falls for her, Hoover wallops the reader with the romance's true impediment: Ryle's violent temper, which for Lily dredges up the nightmare of her own father's abuse of her mother.

As the novel's title indicates, the only responsible choice Lily can make is to leave Ryle, despite the fact that she's pregnant with his daughter. She delivers this decision in a tear-jerking climax during which she asks Ryle what he'd tell their child if she came to him with the same dilemma her mother faces: "Tell me. I need to know what you would say to our daughter if the man she loves with all her heart ever hurts her." Ryle admits that he'd want her to leave, and everyone collapses into weeping.

Not all abusive husbands would concede so readily, but Ryle is a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde figure who only behaves like a jealous, brutal monster when he "snaps." This may strike some as implausible - aren't most abusive men controlling and belittling in minor ways before they become violent? But by making Ryle a handsome prince who only occasionally turns into a fearsome beast, Hoover invests her readers in the romance between him and Lily and the possibility of a happily-ever-after ending in which they work it out. That happy ending is a reader's primary expectation of the genre, an expectation that mirrors the self-deceiving romanticism that leads women to return to abusive partners. When Lily pulls the plug (this marriage cannot be saved), she breaks the conventions of the romance novel and makes the reader feel how hard it can be to leave a man who hurts you. (It does help that Lily has an old flame lurking in the background, a master chef who says things like "In the future...if by some miracle you ever find yourself in the position to fall in love again...fall in love with me."

That's another big CoHo: trauma, specifically "trauma bonding," as romance fans refer to fictional couples drawn together when they discover they're both laboring under past wounds. In the first line of *Verity*, a writer named Lowen witnesses, from close quarters, a man being hit by a truck on the streets of New York: "I hear the crack of his skull before the spattering of blood reaches me." A handsome, kindly bystander helps her to a cafe restroom to clean up, and then they stand around swapping horror stories like battle veterans comparing scars. Her mother has just died, and he recently carried the drowned corpse of his eight year old daughter out of a lake. *It Ends With Us* begins in a similar fashion, with Lily and Ryle meeting on a rooftop and agreeing to exchange "naked truths." She just buried her abusive dad, and he just saw a five-year-old die on the operating table.

The blandness of Hoover's characters make them easy for anyone to identify with. This also appeals to people who view themselves as non-readers because they lack the patience for or interest in literary prose. Hoover never, for example, wastes words in conjuring a sense of place or atmosphere. She might set a novel in Boston or San Francisco or upstate New York, settings chosen seemingly at random, and with a minimum of research. There's no such thing as local color in Hooverland. Hilariously, in *It Ends With Us*, she has two teenagers in a small Maine town discuss their desire to move to Boston, where the people talk in such a funny way, saying "cah" instead of "car" - as if Mainers don't pronounce the word similarly, with an even heavier Yankee accent.

Fiction relies on these proven winners, but it's less common to see them all. *November 9*, lifts the premise of the 1939 movie

Love Affair (reprinted in 1957 and referenced in 1993's *Sleepless in Seattle*) of a couple who can't be together but agree to meet once a year. The hero of that novel, a writer, borrows the self-deprecating wit of a John Green protagonist, and the result is not without charm, as their passionate annual reunions coax the traumatized heroine - an actress whose career has been scuttled by scarring from a house fire - to believe in herself again. Then, just as they are about to get together for real, she discovers that he was responsible for the fire, which he set at her father's house (not realizing anyone was inside), because he blamed her father for his mother's suicide.

The absurdity of this twist is rivaled by that of *Verity*, a gothic novel heavily influenced by Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. The heroine, Lowen, agrees to complete the final volumes in a series of bestselling books whose author, the title character, has become catatonic. Hired by the author's dreamy husband, who is mourning the deaths of the couple's twin daughters.

There are a few abiding mysteries about Hoover's books: Why, for example, is the airline pilot hero of 2014's *Ugly Love* named after Sam Spade's murdered partner in the Maltese Falcon? But I do believe I've identified the secret to Hoover's success. Her books are efficient delivery mechanisms for the maximum dosage of multiple crowd-pleasers: love stories, unabashed smut, trauma plots, tear-jerking soap opera, and wild narrative twists. They are the everything bagels of popular fiction. And as far as her fans are concerned, who could ask for anything more. Hoover's books can be found at her book store, The Bookworm Box, on Main Street in Sulphur Springs, Texas.

# Obits



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### **Mary Junell Ross**

It is with deep sorrow and much love that we mourn the passing of Mary Junell Ross. She peacefully joined her Lord and Savior on Sunday, August 7, 2022. Junell was born on May 10, 1932, in Yantis, Texas. She was the oldest child of three. Her parents, Clyde and Pauline Foster, would often tell stories of what life was like growing up in the small town, where her parents worked at the Whitson Canning Factory. As a young girl, Junell and her family would spend time in Whitewright during the summer months picking cotton for income. Junell attended school in Yantis, in high school she went to the 4H Convention in a dress she made. She met the love of her life, Delwin at the age of 16 after being introduced by friends. Junell left a note for family that she wouldn't be home to tend to the cows and married Delwin on September 3, 1948, in Hopkins County. They settled into married life and soon welcomed their first child Kathy in 1950. In 1951, they rounded out their family when their son James was born. Junell's life soon revolved around her children, husband, and their household. She spent the next decades filling her days working at Munvees sewing factory and retiring from H D Lee as a quality control operator. Junell and Delwin drove for the local Ford dealership picking up and delivering cars during retirement while taking care of their family and loved ones.

Junell found great joy in making things, it was safe to say sewing was a place where Junell was in a league of her own. During her life after her children were out of the house, Junell and Delwin found great joy in traveling to places from Hawaii to Branson. Junell lived for her grandchildren and later her great-grandchildren. Granny Nell wasn't shy when it came to bragging about them. She shared her many talents of sewing, gardening, farming, cooking, shopping or simply just spending time together during summer visits.

Junell was preceded in death by her parents; her devoted husband, Delwin Ross; and her loving daughter Kathy Clayton; her brother, Russell Foster, and her nephew, Paul Foster. She is survived by her loving family: son, James Ross and his wife, Tonya, of Sulphur Springs, Texas; her son-in-law, Charles Clayton of Tyler, Texas; her sister, Gwen Higgins of Quitman, Texas; grandchildren, Holly Primrose and her husband Brent, Cameron Clayton and his wife Melissa, Anthony Clayton and his wife Tanya, Brandi Ross, Zachary Ross and his wife Misty, Lacey McClendon and her husband Brent; great-grandchildren, Ross and his wife Jannette, Kyndel, Madilyn, Addison and Dylan Clayton, Isabella Hancock, Alex and Safina Khan, Slayton and Elle McClendon, Emily and Clayton Primrose, Larson Ross, Aaron Smith; as well as nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends who she touched during her life.

Junell will forever be remembered as a giving, caring and selfless soul, who left an incredible impact on all who knew her. The traditions she created will continue to live on for generations to come by those who loved her dearly.

A celebration of her life will be held at West Oaks Funeral Home, Thursday, August 11, 2022, at 11 a.m. Interment will follow at Ridgeway Cemetery with Brent Primrose, Cameron Clayton, Anthony Clayton, Zachary Ross, Brent McClendon, and Jon Sawyer serving as pallbearers. Honorary pallbearers will be her great-grandchildren. Visitation will be held at 10 a.m., prior to service time.

Donations can be made to Church building fund, <https://gracefamilychurchss.com>, 1901 East Loop 301, Sulphur Springs, TX 75482; or the Ridgeway Cemetery Association, P.O. Box 306, Sulphur Springs, TX 75483. Arrangements are under the direction of West Oaks Funeral Home. [www.westoaksfuneralhome.com](http://www.westoaksfuneralhome.com)



### **Merida Cowser Mabe**

Funeral services for Merida Cowser Mabe, age 89, of Sulphur Springs, will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, August 12, 2022, at West Oaks Funeral Home with Bro. Bob Landers officiating. Interment will follow at Greenview Cemetery with Ian Herron, Randy Herron Jr., and other volunteers serving as pallbearers. Visitation will be held at 10 a.m., prior to service.

Merida passed away on Friday, August 5, 2022, at her residence. She was born on January 26, 1933, in Pickton, Texas, the daughter of Marvlin and Eva Phillips Cowser. She married Roger Lee Mabe on December 11, 1953, in Sulphur Springs, Texas. He preceded her in death on April 17, 2015.

Merida was a member of First Baptist Church where she was very active in the choir, church library, and played piano for N.H. Ministry Services. She loved working on genealogy, sewing, and crochet.

She is survived by daughters, Melinda Herron and husband Randy of Westland, MI, and Susan Mabe of Sulphur Springs; grandsons, Randy Herron Jr. and wife Alissa of Howell, MI, and Ian Herron and wife Maria of Milford, MI; great-grandchildren, Dylan Herron, Kylie Herron, and Evan Herron; and numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband, Roger, she was preceded in death by her parents and brother, Phillip Cowser.



### **Jerry Crabtree**

A memorial service for Jerry Crabtree, age 77, of Sulphur Springs, Texas, was held at 10 a.m. Wednesday, August 10, 2022, at Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home with the Rev. Bruce Stinson and Jeff Harris officiating. Honorary pallbearers were Scott Tubb, Jeremy Tubb, Bill Holden, Tommy Anderson and Tony Wilks. Visitation was held on Tuesday, August 9, 2022, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home. Mr. Crabtree passed away on August 7, 2022, at Carriage House Manor.

Jerry was born on November 12, 1944, in Dallas, Texas, to H.W. and Glynnna (Vanderslice) Crabtree. He married Wanda Williams on October 23, 1964, in Sulphur Springs, Texas. Jerry worked as an insurance agent. He was a member of Shannon Oaks Church. He is survived by his wife, Wanda; daughter, Angie Jenkins and husband, Manuel; grandchildren, Jacob Mazoch (Taylor Greene), Josh Jenkins, Jeremy Jenkins (Jessica) and Jala Jenkins; and great-grandson, Alexander Jenkins.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents; sisters, Barbara Burrows, Peggy Hopson and Jeannie Crabtree; and brother, Phil Crabtree.

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# Back to School

Can you believe that a new school year is already here? With a new school year comes excitement, nerves, or both. Whether your child is excited for school or is a bit nervous for the new year, here are a few easy steps that you can take to help make the transition from summer to school a smooth one:

**Don't over pack their backpack:** An over-stuffed, incorrectly packed or worn backpack can result in a serious injury and affect a child's developing spine. It is important that your child uses both shoulder straps and the waist strap while they are carrying their backpack and

the pack should weight NO MORE than 10% of your child's body weight. A backpack that is too heavy can cause early childhood neck and back pain and even scoliosis.  
**Stick to a bedtime routine:** We know, easier said than done. Adequate sleep promotes focus and learning making it essential for your little one. It is likely they will have some back to school jitters, so if you start ahead of time it will make the first night before school starts a bit easier.

**Kickoff the school day with a healthy breakfast:** We have all heard it before; breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Starting off with a complete, healthy breakfast like oatmeal or eggs (rather than a sugary cereal) will fuel your child for a full day of learning. If your child is not hungry when they first wake up, no problem – pack some healthy, on-the-go options such as trail mix or a banana with peanut butter to eat on their way to school.

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