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At The Corral Gate



Christmas brings familiar traditions near, like old family friends. These are often comforting notions, even nourishing companions for our soul and spirit, brought out during the cold and dark period of the year. For some reason this season, I began to think about Mrs. Claus. You know, Santa's wife whom we know so little about? Why is she so reclusive? Is she shy? Or simply overworked and thus short on opportunities for social interchange? Really, how often have we heard any 'news' about Mrs. Claus? Surely she can't be that much of a shrinking violet, and be married to the most popular man in the known world! So, I googled her.

According to an 1854 account of a holiday musicale, Mrs. Santa Claus made an appearance with a baby in arms, and danced to a holiday song. In an 1862 comic novel in Harper's Magazine, she appeared in a woman's dream dressed in high Hessian boots, a dozen short red petticoats and a large straw bonnet. In the dream, she brought the woman a wide selection of finery to wear. In Boston in 1878, she appeared in a children's story, sitting at a golden desk and writing in a large book. Santa Claus was nearby, looking through a great telescope and from time to time placing his ear to a large speaking tube. Presently he said to the lady (his wife) "Put down a good mark for Sarah Buttermilk. I see she is trying to conquer her quick temper".



Good Housekeeping magazine in 1887 gave a more detailed description of Mrs. Claus' appearance in stating that 'she was dressed for cold weather, her hood large and rounded...rather like a beehive. A broad white ruffle of a lace cap waved back and forth as she nodded. Her outer garment was a brightly colored plaid cloak, quite voluminous. Her right arm protruded through a vertical slit in the side of the cloak. Her hand held a piece of paper covered with figures, and her countenance was keen and nervous, but benignant'. (during this visit, she also instructed an architect on a design for the ideal modern kitchen).

Santa's bride made her most active appearance in a Katherine Lee Bates work published in 1889. In poetic terms, Mrs. Claus wheedles a sleigh ride from Santa, since she had tended their toy and bonbon-laden Christmas trees, the Thanksgiving turkeys and their 'rainbow chickens' that lay colored Easter eggs. Once away, she steadies the reindeer while Santa goes about his work descending chimneys to deliver gifts. She begs Santa to permit her too, and then descends a chimney to mend a child's tattered stocking and to fill it with gifts. Once the tasks are completed, the Clauses return to their Arctic home. At the end of the poem, the good wife remarks that she is the "gladdest of the glad" because she has had her "own sweet will" that Christmas.



A more modern Mrs. Claus appeared in Sulphur Springs on the night of the Lions Club Lighted Parade. Clad in a stylish red velvet dress with white fur trim, she strode about the downtown square greeting children, and even hearing their wishes for Christmas toys. She was observed asking several if they'd "been good" all year! Like the lady in the poem, she gladly set about with helpful tasks and cheerful pleasantries. I watched her sipping cocoa and gaily laughing with children that gathered at her knee. Since I never even saw Santa that evening, I must assume that his bride (who resembles Meryl Streep!) is now quite comfortable carrying out their holiday work independently of him, and has been liberated from her former behind-the-scenes role as elf-and-reindeer tender in the far-away frozen north. I think we should expect to see her make more and more public appearances.

Readers, please pass along any Mrs. Santa sightings that you have or hear about. I'll wager she is a far more interesting and charming person than we previously thought! Til then, I'll await Santa's annual stop at the corral gate because for the cowhands, he typically leaves new riding clothes and "working gear we'll use all year"!



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Obits



Corine C. Snow

Corine C. Snow, age 112, of Sulphur Springs, passed away on Monday, December 5, 2016 at her residence. Arrangements are pending with West Oaks Funeral Home.

Mrs. Snow celebrated her 112th birthday Thursday, December 1st. She was the oldest person in Texas, the 8th oldest person in the United States and the 45th oldest person in the world.

Myrtle Waller

Myrtle Waller, age 94, of Ft Worth, passed away on Monday, December 5, 2016 at Heartis at Eagle Mountain in Ft Worth, TX. Arrangements are pending with West Oaks Funeral Home.

Glenn Logan

Memorial services for Glenn Logan, age 72 of Cooper, will be held Friday, December 9, 2016 at 11:00 A.M. at Triumphant Christian Center with Rev. Jerry McCoy II, Rev. Richard McCoy and Rev. Roy McCoy officiating.

Mr. Logan passed away Monday, December 5, 2016 at Birchwood Manor Health and Rehab in Cooper, Texas. He was born May 1, 1944, in Sulphur Springs, the son of E. A. and Imgene (Younger) Logan. He married Mildred Fay Sesson in Kaufman, Texas. He was a retired welder and served in the Marines.

He is survived by his wife Mildred; daughters, Tammy Hicks and her husband, Teresa McCoy and husband Jerry; daughter-in-law, Shelly Mims; brother, Gary Logan; sisters, Wilma Shopper and Ann Wichser; grandchildren, Jerry McCoy II and wife Gail, Richard McCoy, Roy McCoy and wife Cecilia, Little Thomas Mims and wife Samantha, Joseph Johnson and wife Crystal, Michelle Funk and husband Mark, Victoria Mims and several other grandchildren; numerous great grandchildren.

Glenn was preceded in death by his parents, sons, Sydney Glenn Logan and Thomas Mims and sister, Terrie Logan.

Mildred Mary Midget Howell

Funeral services for Mildred Mary Midget Howell were held at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at West Oaks Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Pete Adrian officiating and Harv Chapman assisting. A private interment followed at Sulphur Springs City Cemetery. Honorary pallbearers were Charles David Sewell, Terry Wheeler, Dale Brem, Ted Menard, Frank Johnson and James Ray Coffey. Visitation was held from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m., one hour prior to service time.

Mildred Mary Howell was born on June 22, 1933 in Hopkins County, Texas the daughter of Elvis Edward Midgett and Mildred Mary Sewell Midgett. She married Gerald Clifton Howell (Jerry) on December 21, 1956. He preceded her in death on December 17, 2001.

Mary was a graduate of Sulphur Springs High School and Texas Christian University (TCU). She was an elementary school teacher in Louisiana and Texas for several years. She later was co-owner with her husband, Jerry, in East Texas Electric Company in Sulphur Springs. She and Jerry later moved to Ft. Worth, TX where she worked at Texas Christian University's Library Department until she retired. She was a member of the First Christian Church.

Mary's passion was reading and caring for her cats. She had special friends who supplied her with reading materials after she retired. Her friends Ted and Nancy Menard shared her love of cats and were devoted to her wellbeing.

She is survived by her cousins Marshall Cates, Joyce Young, Martha Kate Chapman, Betty Dement, Janet Wheeler, Dr. William Midgett, Margie Morrison, Barbara Smalley, Patricia Douglas, Linda Edwards, Mike Midgett, David Sewell and James Ray Coffey.

In addition to her husband she was preceded in death by her parents. Memorials may be made to the Sulphur Springs Cemetery, P. O. Box 651, Sulphur Springs, TX 75483 or to the Sulphur Springs Public Library, 611 Davis St., Sulphur Springs, TX 75482.

Arrangements were under the direction of West Oaks Funeral Home.

Judy McDonald

Mrs. Judy McDonald, age 63 of Winnsboro, passed away on Friday, December 2nd, 2016 in Winnsboro. She was born on January 22nd, 1953 in Wood County to the late W.B. Busby and Ruth Busby. Mrs. McDonald was retired and was preceded in death by her parents.

She is survived by, son, Bobby Davis of Winnsboro; brother, Don Busby of Winnsboro; sister, Bobbie Wilson of Winnsboro; one grandchild, Saidie Davis.

Graveside Services were held on Wednesday, December 7th, 2016 at Hopewell Cemetery at 10:00 am, and Rev. Donny Chamberlian conducted.

Suzanne Daniel

Suzanne Daniel passed away on Tuesday, November 22nd, 2016 in . She was born on September 13, 1942 to the late Gordan Kyle and Margureite Cleveland Kyle. She was a member of Grace Fellowship Ministries of Winnsboro and the Winnsboro Arts Center. Mrs.

Daniel was preceded in death by parents and daughter, Jennifer Daniel.

She is survived by, husband, Gene Daniel of Winnsboro; son, Jeff Daniel of Lewisville; sisters, Marsha Smith, Gail Gholson and Nancy Anderson; grandchildren, Ashten Cantu and Julia Marie Daniel.

Memorial Services will be held on Saturday, December 10th, 2016 at Grace Fellowship Ministries 711 E. Coke Rd. Winnsboro, TX 75494 at 2:00 pm, with Rev. Billy Condrey conducting.

Joyce Oetting

Memorial services for Joyce Oetting, age 71, of Sulphur Springs, will be held Friday, December 9, 2016 at 6:00 P.M., at Birthright Baptist Church with Rev. Edgee Clemments officiating.

Mrs. Oetting passed away Friday, December 2, 2016 at her home. She was born January 28, 1945, in Olive Branch, Mississippi, the daughter of Earnest and Ella Laverne (Allison) Dunlap. She married Erwin Oetting on August 24, 1990 in Hopkins County.

She is survived by her husband Erwin of Sulphur Springs; daughters, Tina Gardner and husband Ray, Annette Loper and husband Tim all of Sulphur Springs; sons, Michael Wilson and wife Kaitie of Sulphur Springs, Eric Wilson and wife Lisa of Wolfe City, Dean Oetting and wife Sheila of Quitman; sisters, Judy Joe and Jackie Burdick of Olive Branch, Mississippi; brothers, James Dunlap and Darnell Dunlap of Olive Branch, Mississippi, Robert Dunlap of Kings Mill, Ohio; numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

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THE IDLE AMERICAN

Rescue Dogs Roll the Dice...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

I really don't know if old dogs can be taught new tricks. A more pertinent question is whether a couple of canines can--or choose to--remember old tricks.

Early on, they understood the "do-you-want-to-go" question warrants their affirmative

response. The query usually means trips to the store, bank or post office. The possibility of such trips offers numerous pleasantries, including treats. They love thrusting their heads through partially open windows to access fresh air.

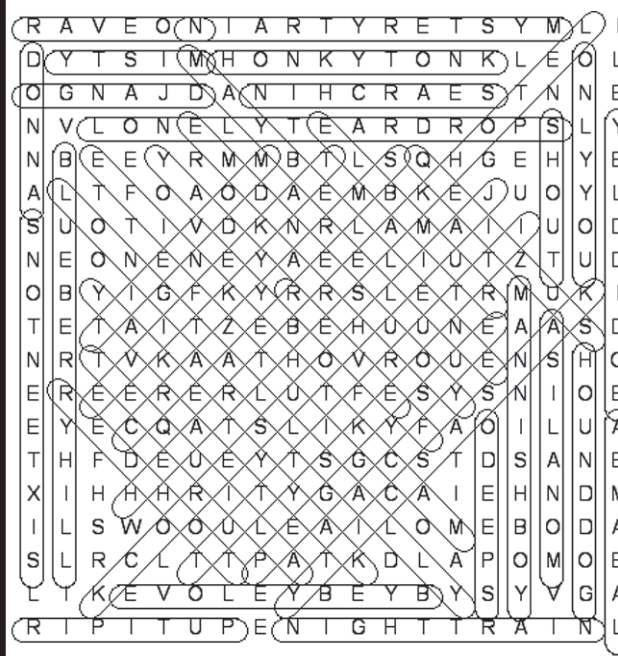
If they were kittens, they'd offer loud purrs upon hearing comments that rescue dogs are highly intelligent. Instead, they kick tail-wagging into high gear, indicating that all--or at least much--is well in their world....

Such trips are interspersed with occasional other "go" offers that result in visits to the vet or the groomer.

Neither is a favorite destination.

On such occasions, they droop, as if betrayed. Thankfully, memories seem short. Soon, the "go" word again is regarded as a signal of auto rides to more favored places.

Answers to Word Search



MCKITTRICK CANYON IS AN EASY HIKE

Tumbleweed Smith



Tumbleweed Smith

I hadn't hiked McKittrick Canyon in a while, so when I scheduled some interviews around Dell City I decided to call my friend Drew Stuart and ask him when the leaves were at peak. "In a couple of days," he said. So in a couple of days Susan and I left home for the three and a half hour drive to McKittrick Canyon, which is a part of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

McKittrick is famous for its fall color. Big tooth maples have the same flaming red leaves like you see during a New England autumn. Other trees provide the golds, oranges and yellows that shine in the mid-November sun. There was no wind at all and the temperature was perfect. When we left the park to head to Dell City after the hike, the temperature was 83 degrees.

The parking lot at the entrance to McKittrick had just a few cars, which was surprising. I expected to see more because of the ideal conditions. We did see one man from New York who had just retired and as a gift to himself was traveling to several national parks. "It's my way of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the national parks system," he told us. "I'm having trouble remembering which parks I visited. They all kind of run together."

We left the parking lot just before ten A.M. with backpacks full of bottled water, snacks and a lunch. We were anxious about what we might encounter. We hadn't gone a hundred yards before we saw a tree with red leaves. The sky was a deep blue against the mountains and made a dramatic backdrop for the colorful trees.

Drew has hiked all over the Guadalupe and has been on obscure trails that only the park rangers know about. While he was editor of the Hudspeth County Herald he published beautiful lyrical prose about his hikes. "Every time I start out on a hike, it's a soul journey," he says. "It's like a spiritual quest." He has camped overnight on some of his meanderings.

A couple of miles into the canyon you encounter the Pratt cabin, built by the head of Standard Oil a long time ago. He called the location of his cabin the most beautiful spot in Texas. We stopped there for a drink of water and brief rest in rocking chairs. We hiked another couple of miles and stopped for lunch at a place with a cavernous overhang complete with stalagmites and stalactites called the grotto.

There are no steep climbs in McKittrick from the entrance to the grotto. Hikers walk most of the way on level ground. Serious climbers go past the grotto and the trail becomes more difficult.

After lunch we started back. Even though we went back the same way we came in, we were amazed at how the place had changed. The sun was lower and the light was intriguing. A stream reflected golden sunlight. The hike lasted less than six hours and covered about six miles. It's an easy one-day trip from Midland-Odessa.

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