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The Other Santa Claus

by Rollin H. Baker - Chapter Eleven - A Cordial Meeting

Last time, we left the elves taking the strangers they had found to introduce them to the entire group.

Brother Sigmund and Sister Belinda watched the mixed group of their friends and the strangers, remaining remarkably calm under the circumstances.

The two leaders held their front positions with the rest of their uneasy contingent standing behind them.

"Won't you please approach," invited the dignified Brother Sigmund.

After the blue-clad strangers came to within a few feet, Brother Sigmund continued.

"If we invaded your domain as Tiny Jove infers," announced Brother Sigmund, "we come as friendly visitors on vacation and mean no harm."

The elderly woman examined the green-suited intruders for several anxious moments gravely. Then she said smiling, "Very well, let us be friends!"

"Naturally," she added, "we wonder about you. As we asked Tiny Jove, we want to know where you come from, how can you manage to see and hear us, and also how you learned to speak our language?"

"We come from the North Pole," explained Sister Belinda, repeating and adding to Tiny Jove's previous recitation.

She continued to hold the elder's attention in repeating, in greater detail, what Tiny Jove had already explained about their work at North Pole Headquarters.

"As for our presence here," declared Brother Sigmund, "we decided to visit the very remote outposts of Santa's domain. Instead of being able to look over the side of the earth's edge, we seem to keep going on and on southward into these strange lands. When do we get to land's end?"

"You surely do not," chuckled the blue-clad leader, "if you continue south. We have thought all along that the edge of the earth occurred in the opposite direction - a long way north of here."

"Moreover," she remarked, "we did find it difficult to believe your story as told to us by your perky young elf - Tiny Jove by name. It happens that we also help Santa except that our Santa Claus resides at the South Pole."

She continued, "we also have the task of preparing gifts for deserving boys and girls which Santa personally delivers each Christmas. Can it be possible that there are two Santa Clauses with each having his own delivery territory?"

"These thoughts muddle one's mind," cried Tiny Jove. "Pray, how do we solve this confusing mystery?"

This admission blurted out by Tiny Jove brought chuckles from the two groups and unwound the previous tension.

"First of all," said the spokesman for the astonished South Polar group, "now that we have agreed to be friends, I truly suspect that we have a kinship. This is certainly obvious since we not only speak the same language but look very much alike - even if our clothing is of different colors. My name is Hermina. My associates and I are called elves like yourselves."

The visitors from the north quickly agreed that they wanted to become better acquainted. Hence, they waited patiently for their new-found hosts to suggest what would come next.

After a short conference with his party, Hermina turned back to address Brother Sigmund and Sister Belinda saying, "Now that we realize that you mean no harm, we want to invite you to our South Pole home. You then can see for yourself that we too have a similar important mission in this world - that of making deserving boys and girls happy at Christmas time."

"I surely speak for all of us," answered Brother Sigmund, "in thanking you for your hospitality."

"Yes," he continued, "indeed we will be pleased to visit your home."

"However," cautioned Sister Belinda, "our stay must be short since we are due back home very soon to begin work again in our gift-making shops."

"I recognize that you have a tight schedule. Even so, before we leave this fascinating place on the great island continent of Australia," said Hermina, "I ask that you go with us to the opposite side of yonder hill."

She pointed to an elevated bit of table land a short distance west of the tour-tram.

"Gee," exclaimed an excited Tiny Jove, "maybe we are in for another real-life adventure."

Next, Chapter 12, Southward Ho

Let's talk turkey

By Marty Graves, Colorado County Extension Agent

Don't let your family become a statistic.

Millions of Americans will be affected by food-borne illness this year and over 9,000 people will die. Don't let your family become one of the unfortunate ones.

Always thaw frozen poultry in the refrigerator.

Stuffing is safer cooked in a separate baking dish instead of inside the turkey.

Fixing poultry with stuffing gives food poisoning several opportunities to strike.

Bacteria present in raw poultry can get into the stuffing. The stuffing, deep inside the bird, may not heat enough to kill the bacteria.

Here re some tips:

•**Prepare Ahead:** If you mix stuffing a day ahead, pre-mix only the dry ingredients and refrigerate them separately from the uncooked bird. That will keep bacteria in the raw poultry from entering the starchy dressing, a food in which many bacteria can grow.

•**Cooking:** Stuff the bird loosely just before you're ready to cook it. That gives heat from the oven a better chance to cook the stuffing through.

Check the stuffing for doneness with a meat thermometer after you take the bird out of the oven, leaving the thermometer in place for about five minutes for an accurate reading.

To be fully cooked, stuffing should reach 165° F and the bird 185° F. Always completely roast a turkey at one time at an oven temperature of at least 325° F.

•**Serving:** Place the stuffing in a separate bowl for serving. Do not **leave out over two hours** (time begins on removal from oven).

Keep the poultry meat, stuffing and gravy separate for refrigeration, too. Divide leftovers into small shallow containers so that they will cool completely and quickly.

•**Refrigerating:** If you don't want to debone the bird right away after your meal, refrigerate the carcass. You can debone later, dividing the meat into smaller portions for storage.

The following chart shows refrigerator and freezer storage times.

Product	Refrigerator Days @40° F	Freezer Months @ 0° F
Cooked poultry		
Covered with broth/gravy	1 to 2	6
Pieces not in broth/gravy	3 to 4	1
Cooked poultry dishes	3 to 4	4 to 6

When there's a question concerning meat and/or poultry food safety, call the meat and poultry hotline: 1-800-535-4555, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EST.

Staffed by U.S. Department of Agriculture home economist, these numbers accessible by Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf.

Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving and remember the two golden rules of food safety:

1. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!
2. When in doubt, throw it out (don't taste it)!

Home Health completes circle

Columbia Gulf Coast Medical Center completes the circle of care for residents of the area with Columbia Homecare of Gulf Coast, according to Mike Murphy, CEO.

The hospital home health agency, formerly called TransMed Home Health, has been in operation for over 12 years and now has offices in Wharton, El Campo, Bay City and Richmond.

Nurses, aides, therapists and social workers see patients on an intermittent basis, 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week.

"During National Home Health Week, we want to recognize the hard work of the dedicated staff of Columbia Homecare Gulf Coast and thank our physicians and patients for their support," Murphy said.

According to Murphy, home health care is a service provided to recovering, disabled or chronically ill persons who need medical treatment or assistance with the activities of daily living.

"More than seven million Americans currently receive home care for mild, acute and long-term needs," Judy Socha, RN, director of Columbia Homecare Gulf Coast, said. "This number will increase as the years go by because the largest segment of our population - the baby boomers - is getting older."

Home health care is one of the fastest growing segments of the health care industry and has been proven to be a cost-effective alternative to treating patients.

If hospitalization is no longer necessary, patients can continue receiving the same quality care in the home for significantly less.

And, for the elderly who need assistance with daily living as well as medical treatment, statistics show the amount to be about half that of corresponding institutional care.

Home health care has grown in the last few years because of several factors.

"Insurers, including Medicare, are favoring home health care as a viable alternative to lengthy hospital stays," Socha said

"And, physicians are supporting scientific evidence that people often respond better to treatment at home rather than in the high-tech environment of a hospital," she added.

"Columbia Homecare Gulf Coast gives us the ability to follow the patient after dismissal from the hospital with a level of care that is personalized, efficient and cost-effective", Socha stated. "The service is designed to combine compassionate care with innovative technology."

Socha explained that modern technology, with state-of-the-art medical equipment for use in the home, and highly trained technicians are the reason specialized care can now be given in the home.

Terry Rutherford, LVN, Columbia Homecare Gulf Coast, measures blood pressure as part of community service activites. *CGCMC Photo*

Transportable medical equipment such as respirators and infusion pumps, makes it easy to provide medical services at home that just a few years ago could only take place in a hospital or doctor's office.

"Many people can be cared for and live independently in the comfort of their own home, surrounded by the ones they love, because of home health," Ms. Socha said.

Home health care is designed to reinforce and supplement the care provided by family members and friends.

"Those of us who work in home health feel that our service is a return to the tradition of people helping people," Ms. Socha said. "In the first part of the century, almost all health care was given in the home. Now we've come full circle, and we help people achieve a high quality of life even when they're suffering from a debilitating illness."

Opry show held for St. Anthony

The former Oaks Theater in Columbus is the place to be Saturday, Dec. 14, as the Columbus Opry presents a Country-Western Christmas Special at 7:30 p.m. All proceeds will go to benefit St. Anthony School in Columbus.

Charlie Herchek, producer, along with John and Brenda Buehler, owners and regular producers, invite all of you to come for a fun-filled evening.

Julie Marshall, John Boggan, Scott Ridgeway and Brenda Hirsch will be just some of the talent on hand.

Also, St. Anthony students will be singing Christmas carols.

Lots of door prizes will be given away during the show. Tickets can be purchased in advance from any St. Anthony student or at the door.

The Opry will be closed Saturday, Dec. 21, for Christmas, but will resume its regular weekly shows Dec. 28.

Commissioners

Continued from Page 1

addressing director, through June 30, 1997, with funds being paid by a grant from the Houston-Galveston Area Council;

•Awarded the bid in the amount of $78,314 for the county clerk's computer system equipment to Apollo Software Inc. of Austin; and

•Announced that no bids were received for the purchase of the old radio tower located at the old jail building.

Police

Continued from Page 1

police department to report a disturbance. Later, the suspect came to report the same offense, involving an ongoing problem.

At 4:45 p.m., Officer Risk and Sgt. Knox were dispatched to a family disturbance on E. State Street.

Upon investigation, Eugene Mendoza was arrested for assault-family violence and terroristic threats.

Mendoza was processed at the police department, then transported to the Colorado County Detention Center for confinement.

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Methodist Church to celebrate 20 years

The United Methodist Church will be celebrating the 20 year anniversary of their new building on Sunday, Dec. 8.

The guests for the Order of Worship will be former members Dr. Russell Thomas, Mrs. Paul Causey and Penny Szymansky Carthcart and husband, Keith.

Jerrol Higgins will be the guest organists for the morning worship.

An afternoon program is planned with music as the theme. Jerrol and Tammy Higgins, the Emmaus Singers, and Bruce Johnson on the keyboards will be featured.

The neighbors and friends of the church are invited

(See Celebration, Page 8)

Eagle Lake Headlight

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Seized dogs placed with SPCA

A hearing before Precinct 1 Justice of the Peace Dodie Dungen resulted in 41 seized dogs being placed with the Houston Chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals.

Two will be adopted back by Torres, the owner of the seized animals who resides on Kenny Street in Eagle Lake, after they have been spayed, neutered, cleaned up and vaccinated.

The dogs were seized Nov. 13 after the SPCA was notified by residents in the area who were concerned for the animals' welfare.

Fifty-one dogs were found, but 10 of the healthier dogs were left with Torres.

Twenty-eight dogs were reportedly tied to trees, cement blocks and small wooden shelters around the residence.

Many of the animals appeared to be malnourished and infested with fleas.

Investigator Dave Garcia and Colorado County Sheriff's Department Deputy Gene Rebel reported finding no food and very little water near the animals.

A 50-pound bag of food was later found in a vehicle at the residence.

In the house, Garcia and Rebel reportedly found 23 more dogs in apparent need of veterinary attention.

After examining the dogs, Laddie Van Dyke, an SPCA staff veterinarian, said at the hearing, all the dogs were infested with fleas, eight had sores and hair loss from an allergic reaction to the bites. Overall, she said, the dogs were thin and reported seven to be "emaciated."

Having been on chains without collars, Van Dyke said many had thick skin around their necks and long toenails, indicating they got little exercise. She said 11 did not have intestinal worms.

Torres took an opportunity to settle the seizure dispute by placing all the dogs with the SPCA rather than take the time during the hearing to consider each of the 41 cases.

Dungen said no criminal charges were to be filed since Torres was "someone who collects stray dogs and wants to give them a home."

Torres' home will be inspected in the future by SPCA officials.

The SPCA reported that nearly all the dogs have homes already.

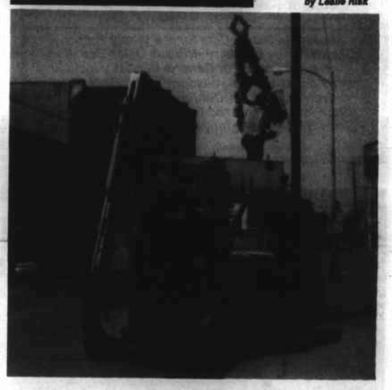
Investigator Garcia, Van Dyke, Michelle Kassahn and Stacy Fox, represented the SPCA at the hearing held in Dungen's office.

County Attorney John Moore served as their legal voice.

Also on hand were Colorado County Sheriff's Department Deputy Rebel, Torres and her teenage son.

It's beginning to look a little like...

Christmas as City workers, Arnold Cardenas driving and Steve Navarro in the lift, put up the City's Christmas decorations downtown this past Monday. *Headlight Photos by Leslie Risk*



NEWSBRIEFS

Chamber reminds merchants... light windows

The Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce would like to remind merchants to please have their buildings decorated and lighted for the "Spirit of Christmas" parade on Saturday, Dec. 7. Have a great Holiday Season!

Bake sale is Friday

My Friend's House Day Care will hold a bake sale on Friday, Dec. 6, from 8:30 until noon in front of IGA Foods. Proceeds will be used to further educate teachers at the day care.

St. Mary's PTC reschedules variety shoot

St. Mary's School Board has rescheduled their variety shoot (turkeys, hams, bacons, steaks, sausage, gift certificates, cash prizes and prizes) for Sunday, Dec. 8, from 1 to 4 p.m at St. Mary's Community Center.

Seniors dance is this Friday

The Senior Citizens Dance will be held Friday, Dec. 6, from 7:30 to 11 p.m. at the Eagle Lake Community Center with music provide by The Country Playboys. The public is invited for $5 per person; door prizes will be given.

Globetrotter legend at RHS Sunday

Reggie "Airman" Dixon (a Harlem Globetrotter Legend) will be at the 2nd Annual Rice High School Celebrity basketball game on Sunday, Dec. 8, at 6 p.m. Pre-sale tickets are $6 and available at Laker Printing & Trophies, Johnny's Sport Shop, IGA Foods, Rice High School and at the Eagle Lake Middle School. Tickets will be $8 at the door. Be sure to purchase a drawing ticket for a chance to play as part of the coaches' team. A food drive will also be held. You're asked to bring a canned good with your ticket.

'Life After Loss' group to meet

The Life After Loss Support Group will hold a meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 10, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church in El Campo. The free program will be "Managing Stress During Bereavement" Facilitator: Greg Tharp, Ph. D. For more information, call 409-543-9487.

Cholesterol/triglyceride screening scheduled

A cholesterol/triglyceride screening will be held Wednesday, Dec. 11, from 7 to 9 a.m. at the Gulf Coast Medical Center Lab in Wharton for $8 (Senior Friends, $5). You must pre-register by calling 409-532-2500, ext. 1300.

CCA meeting set for Dec. 12

Combined Community Action will hold its Board of Directors meeting Thursday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m. at the CCA Center in La Grange. The public is invited to attend.

Pink Ladies selling Christmas decorations

The Hospital Auxiliary (Pink Ladies) will be selling decorations for the Hospital Lobby Christmas tree starting next week. The ornaments may be purchased in the gift shop for $1 each.

Head Start needs classroom volunteers

If you enjoy working with pre-school age children and activities such as reading books, art projects, field trips and outdoor activities, then Head Start needs you. If you'd like to offer your services to low income families and have a few hours to spare each month, consider becoming a Head Start classroom volunteer. Cen-Tex Family Services Inc. will hold Volunteer Orientation and Training in Colorado County for persons interested. The location for training will be the Eagle Lake Head Start Center on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 4 p.m. For more information, call 512-303-7737 or 1-800-484-6634 code 7737.

Lady JV to hold garage sale

The Lady Raider JV basketball team will hold a garage sale Saturday, Dec. 7, from 7:30 a.m. until noon in the Old Kid's Corner building on the square in Eagle Lake. The girls will be raising funds for a trip to China to play basketball. They will also be selling breakfast tacos and other goodies.

Hamburger fund raiser scheduled

Seventh and eighth grade students from Eagle Lake Middle School who are hoping to travel to Washington, D.C., this summer will be holding fund raisers between now and the time they depart. The students, along with their parents, will be selling hamburgers, canned drinks and pickles prior to, during and after the Christmas Parade Saturday night, Dec. 7. Serving is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. at their stand, tentatively situated on Commerce between the Square and the parade announcer's trailer.

Pilot Club bake sale is this Friday

The Pilot Club of Eagle Lake will hold a bake and craft sale Friday, Dec. 6, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, at 205 E. Main, in front of Thomas Insurance.

T.C.H., Cultural Center to hold fund raiser

A fund raising dinner and dance for the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center to be constructed in La Grange will be held Sunday, Dec. 15, from 2 to 7 p.m. at the La Grange KC Hall, 190 S. Brown St. Entertainment will be provided by the Veselanka Band and the Czech Republic. Tickets for the Czech-style dinner and dance are $10 per person. They are available by writing to: Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center, P.O. Box 6, La Grange, TX 78945-0006; or from Raymond David in East Bernard, 409-335-7905.

Defensive driving course set for Dec. 10, 11

A state approved defensive driving course has been scheduled by retired DPS Sgt. Gilbert Kiel at the Wintermann Library in Eagle Lake on Dec. 10 and 11. Class hours are from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. To pre-register call 234-2042 or 234-5411. If unable to pre-register show up a few minutes early.

Sealy 'Fantasy of Lights' parade is Saturday

The Sealy Chamber of Commerce 10th Annual "Fantasy of Lights" Christmas Parade will be Saturday, Dec. 7, in downtown Sealy. The 6 p.m. parade is an exhilarating spectacle of beautifully lighted floats, bands and other exciting entries. After the parade, don't miss the Sealy High School's Speech and Drama Club's presentation of "Annie Get Your Gun", at the high school auditorium beginning at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 5, and Saturday, Dec. 7.

Attorney claims defective wording in Hayek indictment

A crowd of more than 40 people gathered Nov. 21 in the District Courtroom at the Colorado County Courthouse for a pre-trial hearing in the State's case against Darlene Hayek, Colorado County Clerk.

The crowd was informed by Hayek's attorney, Houston Munson of Gonzales, 45 minutes later, that the case would be re-presented to the grand jury the next day, Nov. 22, since the indictment handed down Sept. 5 on three counts of theft by a public servant included "defects."

The decision was reached by attorneys and Judge Fred A. Moore, the visiting judge appointed to hear the case. Moore is from Lockhart and sat on the bench in the 247th Judicial District.

District Attorney W.C. "Bud" Kirkendall agreed with Munson's statements that morning, but later in the day made the decision not to go to the grand jury for a second indictment.

According to Kirkendall, the Sept. 5 indictment includes a "technical defect" in the wording, but could stand in court in case a grand jury chose not to re-issue an indictment the next day.

According to Munson, if the grand jury did not re-issue the indictment, he might move for the dismissal of the original indictment, due to the "defects".

Munson has moved to annul and set aside the Sept. 5 indictment which states Hayek unlawfully appropriated a total of $500 or more, but less than $1,500 on April 12, 1994, May 9, 1995 and April 15, 1996, and filed a motion for inspection of grand jury testimony.

Another pre-trial hearing is set for

(See Hayek, Page 8)

EAGLE LAKE POLICE REPORT

The Eagle Lake Police Department reported the following calls and cases for the week ending Dec. 3.

On Nov. 26, Officer Carl Risk met with a complainant at the police department in regard to a criminal mischief. A report was taken and the case is under investigation.

Lt. Clem Johnson assisted the ambulance with a call on S. Austin Road.

On Nov. 27, Chief Keith Webb met with a complainant on South Austin Road in reference to criminal mischief and a report was filed and the case is under investigation.

Officer Risk was dispatched to Partridge Lane about a suspicious vehicle. The vehicle was not located.

Officer Risk was dispatched to LW's on E. Main in reference to a hit and run. A report was filed.

A disturbance was reported on E. State, but upon Officer Risk's arrival, the complainant did not want the assistance of the police department.

On Nov. 28, Officer Brian Ochoa and Gary Gipson were dispatched to a report of loud music on Fairview Street. The owner of the house was located and a citation was issued.

Lt. Johnson responded to a report of barking dogs on South McCarty and met with the owners of the dogs.

Lt. Johnson delivered a message to McCreary Street in reference to a welfare concern.

Sgt. Jack Knox assisted the county in an attempt to locate a robbery suspect and vehicle out of Columbus.

Sgt. Knox conducted a traffic stop in the 600 block of East Main, which resulted in the driver being arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Colorado County. After processing, Ramon Zarate was transported to the Colorado County Detention Center.

On Nov. 29, Office Randy Davenport and Chief Webb were dispatched to a family disturbance on E. A Street, a civil matter. No action was taken.

Sgt. Knox received a call of an intoxicated person at 601 E. Main, but the suspect was gone upon his arrival.

Officer Tim Crume and Sgt. Knox were dispatched to Keith Street about an aggravated robbery. After speaking with the complainant, a report was filed. The case is under investigation.

On Nov. 30, Sgt. Knox and Officer David Wood were dispatched to E. Union in reference to a burglary. A report was taken and the case is under investigation. In connection with this, a juvenile suspect was arrested Dec. 2.

On Dec. 1, Officer Ochoa and Wood were dispatched to 104 Boothe Drive in reference to disorderly conduct, but the complainant did not wish to file charges.

Officer Ochoa was dispatched to a disturbance on Church Street and met with the subjects, who were arguing, but no crime was committed.

Officer Crume was dispatched to Commerce Street in reference to an alarm. The building was secured and the key holder reset the alarm.

Officer Crume met with a complainant at the police department and was informed that complainant's vehicle had been stolen by a passenger

(See Police, Page 4)

Thomas Clinic, One Care issue challenge

Have you heard?

Colorado County Habitat For Humanity (CCHFH) is building its first house in Eagle Lake!

The Thomas Clinic, which is affiliated with One Care Health Industries, would like to challenge the residents of Colorado County to a fun-draising contest!

The Thomas Clinic will match, dollar-for-dollar, any monies raised for CCHFH during the months of Dec. 1996 and Jan. 1997 — up to $1,000.

And for those of you wanting to get out there with your hammers, wait no more!

Right now plans are being made to have Volunteer Construction Days at the worksite.

Don't worry if you don't know which end of the nail goes up, everyone will have a job they can feel comfortable with.

So, get ready to sign up soon with your family, friends and colleagues!

Please give what you can. The money you donate will, in fact, be doubled and donations are tax deductible.

If you would like to know more about CCHFH, become a volunteer or would like to be considered for home ownership, please contact Rosemary Lewis at 1-800-243-5369; or write, Colorado County Habitat For Humanity, 300 North Street, Columbus TX 78934.

It's not moving fast, but construction has begun on Habitat's first house in Eagle Lake. The slab is poured and the real work will begin soon. Come out and help! *Photo Courtesy of Lois Goodwin*

Hargraves is new nurse practitioner

Mary Jan Hargraves, RN, MSN, is the new Family Nurse Practitioner at the Eagle Lake Medical Clinic.

Hargraves was born and raised in the Houston-La Porte area.

She is single and has three grown children: Wally Groda, 30 years old; Jana Ciaravino, 28; Darrel Groda, 24. She is the proud grandmother of two three-year-olds, Madeline and Anjelika.

Mary Jan graduated from San Jacinto Junior College in 1975 with an Associate of Science degree in nursing. She became registered with the State of Texas in the same year.

For 10 years, she worked in many areas of nursing, then returned to UTMB to complete her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 1988.

(See Nurse, Page 8)