

The Other Santa Claus

anxiously awaited Santa's appearance and wondered how he would react to this mixed aggregation of his own workers and the strangers from afar.

Santa's round, ruddy, and whiskered face peered out. Just as soon as he saw the scattering of elves in green clothing, his eyes widened, his jaw dropped, and a puzzled expression appeared on his face.

"Hi Ho!" exclaimed Santa, as he viewed the visitors. "What in the world do we have here?"

He turned to Hermina and remarked, "I see those strangers in our midst. They are look-alikes for cer-

tain! Again, tell me where are they from?"

"With your permission on worthy Santa," answered Hermina, removing her cap and making a bowing gesture to show respect, "kindly allow me to present their leaders, Brother Sigmund and Sister Belinda. They themselves can best explain these strange circumstances."

"My apologies for keeping you standing out in the weather," said Santa Claus, directing his remarks to the two, "but I am afraid that our modest cottage will not accommodate all of you by any means."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Claus, attracted by the doorknob commotion, had joined her husband at the open door looking equally surprised at seeing the assemblage of strange elves.

"May I introduce myself and my companions," exclaimed a formal Brother Sigmund, doffing his cap and bowing politely to the round couple.

He then proceeded to call each of his elves by name. Sister Belinda did the same for her lady elves.

It was Brother Sigmund who then undertook to explain what they were and how, by sheer accident, they had made contact with a party of his workers.

While Brother Sigmund related the facts about his group, Santa and an equally curious Mrs. Claus had donned their red great coats and snow boots and stepped off their porch. Then they passed among the stalwart new-arrivals as if they were soldiers to inspect each and every one.

From time to time, Santa interrupted Brother Sigmund's narration to ask specific questions. Finally the latter completed his brief account about the North Pole headquarters, the resident Santa Claus, and each year's gift-giving to deserving boys and girls.

The northern described the route of his Santa's itinerary and also stated his notion of the limits of the earth.

The southern Santa slowly began

to comprehend that the earth has a round shape, and that boys and girls and their parents live in the northern half just like they do in the southern half.

"My dear," whispered Santa turning to look at Mrs. Claus, "could it be that my long-lost twin brother and his wife, your equally long-lost twin sister, are the Santa and Mrs. Claus of the North?"

"From what Brother Sigmund says," she replied in a hushed voice anxiously, "that surely makes sense."

"Well," snorted Santa, "Brother Sigmund will certainly take your comments under advisement, but there is only one way for you to convince us for certain. We will just have to get you and your elves to take us there for an inspection!"

He paused a bit as if in deep thought and turned to Mrs. Claus to exchange whispers. Then with twinkling eyes turned to address his own team of workers saying in a loud voice, "I admit that time is short before we must start on this year's production, but what do you say that we all go there?"

He stopped as if he had forgotten something and then added, "That is except for the maintenance crew."

Several members of that crew who were in the audience groaned a little in disappointment when they heard that directive. Oh well, there was always a group of elves to stay home and take care of headquarters.

Anyhow, Hermina and the other southern elves heard him loud and clear, yet could not believe their pointed little ears when they realized what Santa's generous invitation really meant. Almost in unison, they proclaimed joyously that they wanted to make this hurried trip.

Then Santa agreed that the party of his elves would bring up the rear of the air-borne caravan. The sleigh carrying Santa and Mrs. Claus had the middle position. Brother Sigmund and Sister Belinda and their associates with the faithful Arctic Terns would lead the way in their tour-tram.

"Gee," exclaimed sad-faced Hubert, "I wonder what our Santa will say about this parade of strangers. I just hope he becomes truly confused!"

Chapter Fifteen
Underway North

Preparations for the departure went well until Tiny Jove and several other northern elves caught sight of the unusual creatures being harnessed to pull the Claus sleigh.

"Those are the funniest-looking reindeer that I have ever seen," piped a jovial Tiny Jove in his high-pitched voice.

These loud remarks caused most of his associates to draw near and gaze curiously at the sleigh's team.

A groom named Damon replied, "I do not know what reindeer look like. However, we will be glad to challenge them or any other draft animals that our strong and tireless kangaroos can draw Santa's sleigh best and most efficiently."

"We might just take you up on that challenge," bragged Tiny Jove, "but we want you to see our durable and swift sleigh-pulling reindeer team before you decide."

"Your animals lack majestic antlers," noted Tiny Jove, "but they certainly have stout bodies, muscular hind limbs, and massive tails. Excuse me for staring at their small heads, rather delicate forelegs, and that rather humorous way in which they sit straight up on their haunches."

Damon grinned and added, "The kangaroos gain speed by leaping, using its powerful hind legs for propulsion. The tail acts as a balancing structure. Observe how the tail and the hind feet form a tripod to allow for the sitting posture. In that position the kangaroo can even engage in a boxing match. Those short forelegs are great for punching opponents!"

"Our good friends in the Australian Outback supply us with these animals," he added. "Of course we train them and add a bit of magic to boost their sleigh-pulling abilities."

"We can be most thankful that your Santa will be coming to our headquarters in his kangaroo-drawn sleigh," sighed Tiny Jove.

"Why is that?" questioned Damon.

"Because," laughed Tiny Jove, "none of our friends back home would ever believe our kangaroo story without actual visible proof."

"If you want another strange story to carry back," chuckled Damon, "just take a look at that mother kangaroo in yonder stable. Do you see her recently-born youngster's head protruding from her belly? In truth she carries her young around in it. Can your mother reindeer do that?"

Before Tiny Jove could get over being astonished at this unusual feature of kangaroos, Brother Sigmund sent out a call for his group to assemble and to get ready to board the tour-tram.

At the same time the excited southern elves filed into their southern air

vehicle. Finally, Santa and Mrs. Claus appeared, settled comfortably in their sleigh, and made ready to go.

Before leaving, however, Brother Sigmund and Chief Pilot Sorah plotted a course of travel in concert with Hermina and her Chief Pilot Wotan.

Since any direction away from the South Pole Headquarters would direct the caravan in the right direction to reach the North Pole, the Arctic Terns wanted to make this return trip along another pathway in the sky. The travelers would then see a different part of the globe.

This course of action naturally challenged the adventuresome elves. So they and the obliging southern Santa and Mrs. Claus readily agreed to the navigational plan.

The Arctic Terns would guide the aerial flotilla northward. Instead of flying through the Eastern Hemisphere as before, the approved itinerary would follow a zig-zag pattern through the Western Hemisphere - from as far east as the 60th meridian to as far west as the 80th meridian.

This course of travel meant, in navigational terms, that the flight would be over parts of great continents of South and North America.

The weather was cold on that departure day. Yet the northerners sensed that something about the surroundings differed.

In fact, it was Gurd, a soft-spoken elf whose prominent nose had been slightly twisted to one side, who said, "This place is just like ours except that here in late winter - the sun is shining. At home, as all of us know, the sky was pitch black when we left!"

His companions then became aware of the presence of the light-giving sun. They needed no running lights for the air strip.

Who knows, maybe the northern group and their ancestors for generations had just assumed that the sun came out to shine in the summer sky and went away to spend the winter. Now they knew where it went - to the southern part of the globe.

"I vaguely remember where my name came from," said an elf thoughtfully.

"What do you mean by that Copper?" another elf inquired.

"Copper has been the name given to me, my father, my grandfather, and other of my ancestors way back through time. The story goes that the first family member to have had this name received it because his father admired the brilliance of a human

named Copernicus."

"It seems," he continued, "that he got in trouble with the authorities for suggesting that the earth rotates around the sun instead of the sun rotating around the earth."

"But what has this to do with your name?" the other elf asked.

"Just that Copernicus was long and hard to spell," explained Copper. "My ancestor merely shortened it to Copper."

Once the travelers returned home and recovered from all of their vacation excitement, perhaps they would have time to visit the library and find a book which explains all of these environmental differences.

They could contemplate, for example, the obvious reversal of the seasons between the northern and southern hemispheres and the differing positions of the sun caused by earth movements in its orbit around the fixed position of the sun.

The trip home took too long for some of the homesick northern elves. Fortunately the tour-tram followed by the sleigh and the flight vehicle in tandem formed each other in sight and on course. One or more of the terms would fly back periodically to make sure that all three kept pace. Non struggled.

The few stops made along the way allowed the Arctic Terns and kangaroos to feed and rest. Even so, each had its exciting moments for the touring party members. Even before the thought of a rest stop occurred to the passengers, bright-eyed Pamela looked down at the frigid water just off the edge of Antarctic pack ice. Her timing proved perfect to observe a pod of whales saluting them.

"Look out your portholes quickly," exclaimed Pamela loudly to the other passengers as she pointed off to the port side of the tour-tram.

"There," she said, "are those whales which Hermina mentioned. What a wonderful display!"

It was not long after those same elves saw the approach of a thin strip of land fringed by an array of offshore islets. The southern tip curved in an eastward direction. What they had viewed was the celebrated Cape Horn - the southernmost end of South America.

Shortly afterwards, the skilled pilots of the two flight vehicles and the tiring kangaroos landed on soft turf. They were somewhere in Patagonia.

Next, Chapter 16, Icy Patagonia



A PRESSING DATE

Before it's too late, we want to thank all our friends for being so kind to us. Hope the holiday really suits you!

ROYAL CLEANERS

Teetsie, Laura & Tiny

Christmas Greetings

We know you've been good... especially to us! Many thanks to all for making our year merry.

Taco Tony's

Cathoun Road at Hwy. 90-A
Tony & Rosa Garcia, Owners, And Employees
Bertha, Martha, Javiel, Vicky, Isabel, Maria S., Graciela, Maria P., Patricia and Tony Jr.
"Feliz Navidad"



VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

A wish that your Christmas blooms with happiness, love and caring!

Sheridan Dairy Delite
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Nance
234-3977

Christmas for our feathered friends

ORNAMENTS FOR "BIRDIE CHRISTMAS TREE"

Here are some ideas to try on our own Birdie Tree:

1. Small, powdered-sugar coated doughnuts - attached to tree branches with peanut butter.
2. Strings of popcorn.
3. Suet and seed balls wrapped in netting.
4. Orange halves filled with peanuts, raisins, Grape Nuts*, sunflower seeds.
5. Small foil cups covered with ribbon and filled with peanuts, raisins, Grape Nuts*, sunflower seeds.
6. Pine cones rolled in melted suet, then birdseed.
7. Pine cones spread with a mixture of peanut butter mixed with cornmeal or breadcrumbs (birds cannot swallow plain peanut butter), then roll in bird seed.
8. String peanuts in their shells and cranberries onto a thin wire. Shape into a wreath, tie ribbon on top or bottom.

Preparation: Put suet through meat grinder, melt in double boiler, then cool until hardened slightly. Reheat

All Good Things on Christmas

Here's hoping the holiday season delivers an abundance of joy to you and yours, just as you've brought us this past year.

From the staff at the
Eagle Lake Headlight
Jeannine Fearing • Carol Cardenas
Leslie Risk • Lynda Appelt • Shirley Luedecke
Betty "Granny" Drymalla • Katherine "Doc" Smith

May the warm glow of Christmas light up your life.
John B. Myres, D.D.S.
Vilma Fernandez, D.D.S.
And Staff

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TAAS exit test registration set for next month

Individuals who are no longer enrolled in a Texas public school and wish to register to retake the exit level TAAS test, and all individuals who wish to take the TEAMS test may pick up a registration packet at any high school campus or education service center.

Packets may be obtained from Tom Davidson at Rice High School in the office. The test registration form must be completed, returned in the pre-addressed envelope and received in Iowa City, Iowa, no later than 5 p.m. on Jan. 24, 1997.

The Texas Education Agency and National Computer Systems will not be responsible for registration forms that are delayed or lost in the mail. To ensure that individuals are registered, forms should be sent either by registered or certified mail.

Juvenile Detention Facility delayed

By Lynda Appelt, Contributing Writer

In Now, the State of Texas needed a cost estimate before it could release funding for Eagle Lake's Juvenile Detention Facility.

An architect was employed and plans were drawn. These plans resulted in an over-budget of \$400,000.

According to County Judge Vince Slominski, a look was taken at what was included in some areas that could be made.

One additional costly item was architectural figures based on the purchase of concrete blocks from outside the local area.

It was pointed out to the architect that this item could be purchased in the area from Eagle Concrete or in Sealy at a substantial savings.

Other cuts included the removal of two or three rooms from the administration building, resulting in the cutting of the short term detention facility from 10 to eight beds.

The kitchen and drill areas were reduced by shrinking the basketball court from full size to 3/4-court.

These cuts lowered costs enough to come in under the budget funding.

The letting of bids is expected by the second week in Jan. 1997 with bids awards expected the first week of Feb.

Slominski stated, "We are very pleased with the fact that we didn't compromise security in any way."

EAGLE LAKE POLICE REPORT

The Eagle Lake Police Department reported the following calls and cases for the week ending Dec. 23.

On Dec. 17, Officer Carl Risk met with complainants at the police department in reference to an assault. After information was gathered and statements taken, a report was filed and the case is under investigation.

On Dec. 19, Lt. Clem Johnson met with a complainant at the police department, who reported criminal mischief on Union Street. A report was taken and the case is under investigation.

On Dec. 20, Chief Keith Webb met with complainants at the police department in reference to a theft on FM 3013. After investigation and interviewing suspects, the case was cleared with the return of part of the merchandise.

On Dec. 22, Officer Eric Bilbo met with a complainant at the police department and took a report of criminal mischief to a car, which is being investigated.

Officer Brian Ochoa was dispatched to Semper Street in reference to a fight in progress. After investigation, two suspects were issued written warnings for criminal trespass.

Officer Ochoa was dispatched to South Austin Road in reference to the burglary of a motor vehicle. Information was gathered and a report submitted.

Officer Tim Crume was contacted at the police department in reference to an aggravated assault. A statement was taken and the case is under investigation.

Officer Crume was dispatched to 500 E. Main in reference to an intoxicated person. The suspect was issued a warning for criminal trespass.

The police department is investigating a family violence assault that occurred on Dec. 23. A report was made and statements are being taken.

Other calls during the week consisted of numerous loud music complaints, reckless driving and other minor calls.

Rice CISD Board looks over Jackson's athletic plan

By Lynda Appelt, Contributing Writer

Athletic Director and Head Football Coach Dennis Jackson presented a football participation plan to the Rice CISD Board of Trustees at a special meeting last Thursday afternoon.

The plan, which was prepared by Jackson at the request of Superintendent Dr. Richard Gott, was not approved, pending addition of suggestions made by the Board.

Jackson, under the direction of Gott, was instructed by the Board to take a closer look at some aspects of the document.

Gott felt it was necessary to take a serious look at the athletic program in the Rice CISD and, therefore, Jackson was requested to prepare an athletic improvement plan.

After the plan was prepared, the item was placed on the Board agenda as an athletic program issue in order to allow discussion with Jackson.

The document was presented to the Board by Jackson as a football participation plan.

Some Board members felt the plan should not just target football.

Coaches David Janacek and Gary McNeal along with Brent and Dalaine Pittman addressed the Board during the meeting in regard to the athletic program.

A changing coaching staff from year-to-year and student attitude were mentioned during the public comment period.

Campus visits, summer contact of athletics, parent contact and junior high contact are emphasized in Jackson's plan.

The plan states "during athletic practice I (Jackson) will observe factors that could influence continued participation."

"They include:

- Interaction between coaches and athletes;
- Discipline among the athletes;
- Organization of the athletics and program as a whole;
- Coaching philosophy, technique and safety in the program;
- Continuing in the program; and
- Involvement of all athletics."

Coaches will be encouraged to attend all contests and games.

Relationships between coaches will be observed and discussed in formal conferences with individual coaches.

The Board also approved a performance contract with Johnson Controls.

Commissioners agree to lease office for probation department

At their Tuesday, Dec. 23, meeting, the Colorado County Commissioners' Court agreed to sign a 13-month lease for office space to house the probation department.

The property, owned by Roy Stallman, is located at 1023 Milam, Columbus, the former site of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It has approximately 3,600 square feet.

The agreement will go into effect on Jan. 1 at a cost of \$600 per month.

According to County Judge Vince Slominski, the County has received some \$4,800 from the probation department's Community Corrections Program Fund. That money, along with the \$200 generated from raising the rent of the Colorado County Central Appraisal District, will offset the rent cost.

By relocating the probation department, the County will now be able to move the County Attorney's office upstairs in the courthouse in an effort to provide that office with much-needed, additional office space.

It was just last month that the County had provided the appraisal district with an 18-month notice to relocate due to an office space crunch at the Courthouse.

The Court also approved an agreement in the amount of \$900 with Envision of Houston to conduct a hazardous material survey at the old county jail.

The survey must be complete before the County starts the demolition process of the old jail.

In other business, the Court:

- Approved a collection contract with the Colorado County Central Appraisal District;
- Adopted a resolution to support the change in initial curtailment of interruptible water of stored water for the four major irrigation districts within LCRA;
- Approved a request for maternity leave for Melissa Garza, secretary to public defender Jeffie Massey, effective Dec. 23 through Feb. 3, 1997;
- Adopted the Colorado County Basic Emergency Management Plan;
- Awarded bids for gravel, lime, hot and cold mix, culverts and herbicides to various bidders; and
- Received notice that Raymie Kana was appointed the County Auditor for Colorado County by order of the district court judges for 1997-98.

NEWSBRIEFS

City offices closed for holidays

The City Offices will be closed on Dec. 24 and 25 for Christmas and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 in observance of New Year's Day. Residents are reminded to have their garbage out early since two trucks will be run to handle the large volume.

Museum Thrift Shop open this Saturday

The Prairie Edge Museum's Thrift Shop will be open Saturday, Jan. 4, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. It's located right downtown on the corner of Lake Ave. and E. Main Street, so it's convenient and quick. Stop by and check out their specials!

Blood drive scheduled for Jan. 2

A blood drive will be held at Rice District Community Hospital in the conference room on Thursday, Jan. 2, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. To make an appointment contact the hospital by calling 409-234-5571.

Colorado SWCD, NRCS have another very productive year

Reported By Colorado SWCD personnel in Colorado County.

Sunderman Re-elected

In Oct. of this year, in conjunction with the county hay show held at the Community Center in Eagle Lake, Henry Sunderman, Zone IV (Eagle Lake-Matthew area) was re-elected as director for a four year term.

During the regular Oct. Board meeting, James Helfrich, Zone V (Columbus, Alleyton, Bernardo area) was elected to serve as chairman of the board, Henry Sunderman, Zone IV (Eagle Lake) Vice Chairman and Theodore Schultz, Zone I (Frelsburg area), Secretary/Treasurer. Melvin Albright, Zone II (New Bielau area) and Roy Stallman, Zone III regular members. Clara Horndt is the Executive Secretary/Technician and Beverly Tuck, Secretary Trainee are District employees.

29 Year of Experience

Colorado SWCD provided technical assistance to land-users of Colorado County through the personnel of NRCS who had a total 31 years experience.

Connie Fair, District Conservationist for NRCS (formerly SCS) is the only in the local field office, however, part-time assistance from the technical specialists from Bryan is available.

Colorado SWCD Board meetings are held at 8 a.m. on the third Thursday

of each month at the County Agricultural Building in Columbus. These meetings are always open to the public.

Awards Banquet

The annual conservation awards banquet was held March 28, 1996, at 7 p.m. in the Veterans Community Center, Columbus, with 300 people attending.

Forty awards were presented to district winners of the coloring, poster and essay contests. Of the 1996 total entries, 1098 were coloring entries; 527 were poster entries and 373 (including poetry) essay contest entries.

The district winners in the Coloring Contest sponsored by the district were: April Pagel, Garwood Elementary; Scott Janacka, St. Michael Weimar; Jennifer Richardson, Columbus Elementary and Dene Kresak, Garwood; Mindy Moulder, St. Anthony, Columbus; Ashleigh Adams and Judy Reyna, and Dennis Byler, Weimar and Eric Guthrie, Rice CISD.

The district winners in the Poster Contest were: Katie Barts, St. Anthony, Columbus; Adam Rhodes, St. Anthony; Jenna Kubesch, St. Michael; Brandon Applegate, Columbus; and Dene Kresak, Garwood.

Awarded first place for growth, lime, hot and cold mix, culverts and herbicides to various bidders; and

•Received notice that Raymie Kana was appointed the County Auditor for Colorado County by order of the district court judges for 1997-98.

The Christmas spirit continues

An Epiphany celebration is being prepared once again by the parishioners of the Catholic Parish of the Nativity (Eagle Lake) for Sunday, Jan. 5. The evening will begin with Evening Prayer at 6 p.m. in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Barry Bauerschlag, Pastor of Eagle Lake United Methodist Church will preach. The prayer will be followed by the Procession with the Magi to a lively atmosphere where there will be Christmas caroling and refreshments. The celebration will conclude with the Epiphany fireworks. All are invited to share in the Christmas Spirit of these wonderful days.

Art exhibit judging is Jan. 11

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Art Exhibit will be Saturday, Jan. 11, in the Rice High School Commons. There will be an open house from 12 to 1 p.m. with refreshments. The judging will begin at 1. Everyone is invited to come and view the art from noon until the judging begins.

Girl Scout cookies to go on sale

The Girl Scouts of Eagle Lake will begin their annual cookie sale Jan. 11. Be prepared when the girls come knocking on your door. They would greatly appreciate your support again this year. If for some reason you are missed and wish to order cookies, please call Margaret Henry at 234-5918 or Roberta Johnson at 234-5297.

Defensive driving course is Dec. 28

A state approved six-hour defensive driving course has been set by retired DPS Sgt. Gilbert Kriel at the Agriculture Building, 316 Spring in Columbus, on Saturday, Dec. 28, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To pre-register, call 409-732-2734 or attend at the class room a few minutes early.

Bible study to start in Jan.

Bible study classes will begin every Thursday starting in Jan. at 7 p.m. at 714 Partridge Lane. For more information, contact Larry Wiese at 234-2702.

