



On the Edge!



Photo by Eddie Tubbs

El Coronado Lodge

Merry Christmas!

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation



**Jeff Davis, Park Interpreter
(Jeff Davis, Poet)**

**'Twas the night before Christmas, when
all through the Park,
Many creatures were stirring, who live in
the dark.
Registrations were hung on RV's nice and
high,
In hopes that park police would pass
them all by.**

**The campers were nestled all snug in their
cots,
While visions of hiking trails danced in
their thoughts.
Hikers in boots and bicyclists in
spandex,
Had just settled down after their many-
mile treks.**

**When out on the rim there arose such a
ruckus,
The rangers all feared that lightening had
struck us.
Away down the Park road they flew like a
shot,
In pickups that taxpayer money had
bought.**

The moon glinting off the Lighthouse

**Formation,
Lit up the little river like a red
crustacean,
What the rangers beheld in the sky
was a stunner!
'Twas a tiny chuckwagon pulled
by eight swift roadrunners!**

**With a grizzled ol' driver at the reins
of the truck,
They knew in a moment it must be
Saint Chuck.
Faster than coachwhips those road-
runners flew
As Chuck hollered and spat at the
avian crew.**

**"Now, Chappy! Now, Feathers! Now,
Fleetfoot and Tweety!
On, Flappy! On, Yardbird! On,
Paisano and Speedy!
To the rim of the canyon! You're
not just ground dwellers!
We've gotta get toys to them
camping fellers!"**

**Down into the canyon the birds pulled that
wagon,
With its berth so full of toys that its
springs were adraggin'
And then with a "Whoa there!" and a
yell and a whoop,
The strange menagerie stopped at the first
camping loop.**

**No fireplaces were found there, not a
chimney or flue,
But Saint Chuck wasn't discouraged,
the zipper'd do!
And so, silent as a Deer Mouse, into each
tent he snuck,
No nocturnal creature was as quiet as
ol' Chuck.**

He was dressed all in buckskin from his
neck to his shin.
And to describe his ol' hat, where
does one begin?
From crushin' to stompin' to bullet
holes and more,
That old hat had seen its share of
mistreatment before

And upon his feet might have
been boots long ago.
Which now barely covered his arches and
toes,
But his smile it was merry and had
twinkles galore,
As he left presents for campers on the
canyon floor.

He sidled to the wagon, hauled his girth
into the seat,
And with a whip of the reins, the birds
beat their feet.
The rangers heard his last words as he
charged into the night,
"Merry Christmas to all in Palo Duro
campsites."



Artist
Jack Sorenson

(Editor's note: Thanks to Clement Clark Moore for the structure of the poem, based on his poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

An apology to Jeff Davis for substituting Jack Sorenson's painting of Santa's team with horses instead of roadrunners. It is very difficult to find a team of roadrunners.

Thanks to Sorenson Art and Jack Sorenson for the portrayal of Santa and his bag of toys.)



Shannon Blalock
Park Superintendent

I LOVE the holiday season! I love it for many reasons, but the most important are family and traditions. People take time to slow down and enjoy life together. Families share laughs and stories and make memories that last for a lifetime.

My family and I are embarking on a new adventure as I make the transition to the Texas State Park Regional Director position.

Happily, we will be living in our hometown of China Spring in the house that I grew up in

As we are packing boxes and preparing to move, I cannot help but think about the holiday seasons to come being spent in the exact same place where I spent my entire childhood. Family traditions were born in the house, and one tradition stands out most of all.

For years, four generations of women would come together at the beginning of December to make Christmas candy for family, friends, and neighbors. It was a tradition that involved more sugar, Karo syrup, and butter than local stores often had in stock at one time.

My sister and I were the youngest involved, but we could sure stir; and we always offered ourselves up to taste. It's an incredible blessing to know that I will be able to continue to share this tradition with my daughter, Carly Sue. She will stir Divinity and make more peanut patties than her little arm will like, and it will be in the same kitchen as her great-great grandmother. That is pretty special.

I hope each of you finds time to spend with family and friends over the holiday season. I will miss each of you a great deal. But, rest assured, if you head south around the beginning of December and want a sweet treat, Carly and I will fix you up!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone!

Take care, Shannon.

(Editor's note: Partners will miss Shannon and wishes her and her family God speed in her new position. Laramy Estel will be the interim Park Superintendent. We welcome Laramy and look forward to his tenure.)

Annual Banquet



Bruce E. Parker
Great Grandson of Quanah Parker
Photo by Lynda Barksdale

Partners held its annual dinner October 28 in the Mack Dick Pavilion. The speaker was Bruce E. Parker, great grandson of Quanah Parker.

Mr. Parker related his experiences growing up as a Comanche child and adult. "The reality was that I was living and working in two worlds," he related. "I was always aware that there was more of myself that I needed to explore and understand. Presently, I am furiously learning [Comanche life and culture] because I have lost too much time." We concur with Mr. Parker when he says, "I return to Palo Duro Canyon to nourish my soul."

Thank you, Mr. Parker.



Christmas 1955

**By
Carl Fowler**

Everyone has one—that is, a favorite Christmas story.

Most memorable Christmas stories are centered around one or more childhood memories. Of course, I have those as well, but my most memorable story derives not from my childhood in the 1930s and 1940s but from my time in the U.S. Army in the 1950s, precisely in 1955.

At Christmas time, many in my 30th TAAM Company stationed in Germany were allowed to go home on leave to the United States, and many did. But my buddy from Oklahoma, Jerry, and I decided to spend our two weeks traveling to Spain. The summer prior to this Christmas, we had travelled to France, Switzerland and Italy, knowing that our opportunity to travel in Europe was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us. This was ten years after the end of WWII, and America and Germany were at peace.

Jerry and I were army aircraft mechanics, stationed near a small village,

Hoppstatden, in southwestern Germany. On that summer trip, we had spent a couple of nights in Paris visiting the Moulin Rouge where Lena Horne was the featured entertainer (look her up millennials) and the Folies Bergere. We then travelled to Lucerne and Lake Lucerne in Switzerland where I received the worst sunburn of my life in the high, thin air.

Then on to Venice to include a gondola ride through the city with a loud speaker somewhere blaring out Tennessee Ernie Ford singing “Sixteen Tons.” (Look him up millennials.)

From Venice, we took a boat ride though choppy waters to the Isle of Murano and the famous glass blowing facilities where I bought a couple of glass-blown figurines for Christmas presents to send home later.

After surviving the increasingly rough water on the return to Venice, we boarded a train to Rome. I have not enough space to devote to Rome in this column, so I will move on.

For our Christmas trip, Jerry and I bought roundtrip tickets to Barcelona (a wise decision) and exchanged army currency for currency to be spent in Paris (a way station) and Spain.

Barcelona, Spain, to me, was, at the time, an enchanting city. The main thoroughfare was broad and adorned with kiosks and vendors selling flowers whose scent permeated the atmosphere throughout the city.

When Ernest Hemingway in his novel, “The Sun Also Rises,” depicts the lost generation of American expatriates in the 1920s traveling meaninglessly in a circle to the great cities of Europe in a journey to nowhere, he included Madrid. Perhaps they should have gone to Barcelona instead. Maybe they could have found themselves.

I learned to dance in Barcelona. Jerry and I, looking for entertainment, entered a nightclub featuring not only flamenco music and flamenco dancers but also other music as well. There was a girl! And another girl! After all, it is difficult for a man to learn to dance without a woman.

I did not learn to dance the flamenco, but I did learn to dance the ballroom foxtrot and waltz. This remains my repertoire. I still cannot dance the Latin rhythms. That is just as well. At my age, I doubt that I could survive the lively beat. I could die trying, however, and that would probably be a good way to pack it in.

The two weeks came to an end. We left Barcelona on a Saturday, Christmas Eve, and arrived Saturday evening in the Paris Railroad Station at 7 p.m. The train to Frankfurt, Germany, and to Hoppstatden would leave Sunday morning at 7 a.m. We had spent most of our money in Barcelona and, except for a few francs left over from our passing through Paris the first time, we were flat broke. As I mentioned above, we had roundtrip tickets to Hoppstatden.

We bought a couple of sandwiches for our Christmas Eve dinner and found a couple of railroad benches. It was an uncomfortable night. If Santa had been looking for us, he couldn't have found us.

Jerry and I arrived at our barracks in Hoppstatden the evening of Christmas Day in time for Christmas turkey. We had presents from home, mostly cookies, since anything else would eventually have to be shipped home.

Even today, when Christmas arrives on its annual visit, I think not only of the "reason for the season" but also of Christmas 1955. That experience for a twenty-four-year

old is one that cannot be boxed, wrapped, put under a tree or in a sock. It resides in my treasure of memories with the smell of roses and the sounds of flamenco music—and a railroad bench in the Paris railroad terminal.

Merry Christmas!



Parting Gift

Photo by Lynda Barksdale

Frannie Nuttall, Partners President, presents Shannon Blalock a painting by Jack Sorenson, a parting gift to Shannon from Partners as she prepares to move to her new position as Regional Director in Waco. Photo was taken at the annual dinner on October 28.





Courtesy of Sorenson Art
Jack Sorenson Artist

Jack distributed Christmas cards to the attendees at the annual dinner.



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Jack Sorenson

“On earth, peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:8-14)

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