

CHRONICLE

IS PUBLISHED BY MONDY ON MONDAY FOR THE MONDYS
THEIR KIN, NEAR KIN, AND A FEW FRIENDS

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Issue 5-19 is on its way to you -- at least it is in the hands of the postmaster and now, 4PM on December 1, it is time to start putting together another edition. When I dropped off the Chronicle today, I found a letter from Bessie and Bertha, so that will go in this issue. And I simply must include one of Pat's columns. The Chronicle doesn't seem complete without something from Pat.

PRAYER IN SCHOOL

Gingrich says he wants prayer in school. Now it seems to me that would be very educational. Of course it would have to be optional with the student, but I think it ought not to exclude anyone. I can see it now. Some kids would pray for rain because their dad's corn crop needs it so badly, while another would pray that it wouldn't rain because his dad just mowed his hay and if it rained, he would lose his crop of hay. Their churches might even offer to furnish Testaments for each student to read and study. Then the Catholics would want to distribute rosaries to every one, and at prayer time they would rise and say their "Hail Marys". I suppose the Jewish students would want a cantor for their prayers. The Muslims would want to bring their prayer mats to class and (after finding the exact direction to Mecca) they would have to prostrate themselves on the mat for their prayers to be heard. And what about the Peyote Indians? They would have to do their prayers while smoking peyote, or whatever it is they do, which is legal, but I'm sure someone would object to the second-hand smoke. Some of the voodoo cults

would probably want to sacrifice a rooster so that their prayers would reach heaven. I think that maybe the Howling Dervishes and Whirling Dervishes would provide the greatest amount of entertainment to those who could not understand their language. Yep! Gingrich is right. We ought to have prayer in school -- it would be very educational.

If we had prayer in school when I was growing up, I don't remember it. We did have it on Assembly day (Wednesday) most of the time, and I think we had it before a football game. I don't think anybody prayed for the other team -- not out loud, anyway.

I have two letters from Pat that have not been published because I did not have room in the last issue and did not have time to type them for the previous little short Chronicle I put out before leaving for LA. But since her material is not date-dependent, it is good anytime. The following letter is very interesting -- to someone like me who loves to learn about nature.

FROM PAT (10/27)

"...Last week while the Houston area was suffering all those terrible inundations, I had the pleasure of escorting two people from London around our town to various galleries, exhibits, and such, and certainly did not need a rowboat. We had some rain a few days before, but nothing like East Texas had. That morning the Englishman's daughter called from London to see if he was afloat. Thank heavens, being a good six hour's drive away, we don't seem to get that amount of the wet stuff. In fact, though it may come in wads at times, we almost always have the opposite problem of not enough rain. At this moment rain is falling in a nice gentle patter that

will soak in nicely.

The London visitors are staying in the home of friends of mine who are now in London. They had asked me to help amuse them and since they are both artists, they thought I would know all the right places to go. I was amused to find that this couple is only acquainted through an art class in which they were enrolled. They are not related, or married, or even good friends. They are just "traveling companions" and didn't seem to like each other very much. He complained about her lack of organization (while she was in the post office) and she resented his being pedantic with her; explained more than she wanted to hear. I'm still wondering where they stashed their respective spouses while they were visiting here. Well I didn't have the courage to ask them; I just escorted them. I was flattered (they were probably just being polite) that they lingered longer over my exhibit than in any of the galleries. I enjoyed the day but remain open-mouthed at what people can do these days without being ostracized. They were both married and had grown children and seemed to think nothing at all of traveling together. But maybe this is better than the conditions at the turn of the last century when a woman suffered turned up noses if she inadvertently showed her ankle. At that time, a man always made sure that the woman would precede him wherever they went, but if stairs were to be climbed, the man went in front to preclude his seeing her ankle if it were exposed.

There was a story in the local paper this week about a young coyote that attacked first a forklift, then turned on a truck bringing workers to a large complex here called Industrial Fabrications. The infuriated creature was foaming at the mouth and acted extremely angry. One of the men in the pickup had a shotgun, and after it had chased several vehicles and started for him he shot it. Of course the men thought it might be rabid so its head was sent to the Laboratory for rabies test. We do have a population of rabid coyotes in some parts of South Texas and no one wants it to spread. Canine rabies spreads easily to dogs, and then to their owners. Bait has been

dropped all over a large area, not to kill the coyotes but to "vaccinate" them.

It turned out that the coyote was not rabid, but had probably become inspired to attack all that heavy equipment that was destroying its habitat. Poor thing. I feel sorry for it, and I can certainly understand how it felt. Makes me sad to see the world being covered with concrete and bitumen. I guess the poor creature just couldn't take it any more.

Now the creature was foaming at the mouth, an indication to many people that it was "mad". But there may be another explanation. Once, sometime back, we were all loaded up and ready for an overnight trip when our dog greeted us with a wagging tail and tons of foam dripping from its mouth. I knew that the dog had had rabies shots, but here he was with all the evidence I needed to know that he had rabies. I rushed to the telephone and called the vet. He just laughed. Then he told me about how frogs play tricks on dogs. If the dog picks up a frog, the frog secretes something from their skin that causes a dog to literally go nuts and foam at the mouth something awful. He told me to take the garden hose and wash out the dog's mouth very thoroughly. I did so; no rabid dog. So I'm thinking that that poor coyote had caught a frog and all its actions were caused by this.

[Thanks, Pat. I learn something new almost every day.]

I had a strange experience last Sunday afternoon when I attended a meeting of the Watercolor Society of South Texas. Until yesterday it has been quite warm here in C.C., in the eighties in the afternoon and I dressed appropriately in an orange Halloweenish dress and wore a pair of really cute orange sandals that I bought a couple of years ago and because of their color have not worn them more than three times. I was to be one of the speakers at the meeting. As I left the car I was pained to see that there was a white scar on the toe of one sandal. I wondered how I had done it. I walked on into the building and then I noticed a big white scratch on the side of

the other sandal. A few more steps and I could see that where the straps crossed, there were white spots on both shoes. I kept walking and found a chair where I sat down and tried surreptitiously to examine my footwear that seemed to be turning from orange to white. I found other white spots that hadn't been there before. And now I was being called to speak. The crowning blow came when I stood up to walk to the front of the room and one sole and heel began flopping loose. The shoes were disintegrating right under me! With a half limp that I hoped no one noticed, I made it up to the front and delivered my spiel, all the time wondering if I was leaving a trail of orange bits behind me that would lead me back to my chair (like Hansel left bread crumbs so he could find his way back home). By the time I had crawled and limped back to my chair, I was practically barefoot. Have you ever tried walking in shoes that simply did not want to be walked in? But no one seemed to notice that I had had a seizure of arthritis. I decided that if any one said anything about all those orange bits on the floor I'd say that at Halloween one could expect to find a lot of that around. Or if they knew I was responsible I would tell them I was a witch and was gradually destroying those shoes.

Those shoes were made in Taiwan and were cheapies anyway, but I have never seen anything dissolve into such a mess so quickly. I think someone found out the truth for there is a rumor going around that poor Pat needs a pair of shoes, and a collection is being taken.

FROM OUR SPRINGFIELD REPORTERS

[There have been few issues of the Chronicle that has not included a report from Springfield and I want to thank Bessie and Bertha for these reports.]

Dear Margaret, Harrison, and all the Chronicle Cousins and Friends:

Thanksgiving Day is over and I hope everyone of you had a real nice day. Bertha and I fixed turkey & dressing, ham, chicken & dumplings (my family always wants chicken & dumplings for Thanksgiving and Christmas) and all the good things that go with it. And we all pigged

out! As usual! But we all enjoyed the day and were indeed thankful that we were still able to prepare such a feast and enjoy it. We did not have as many for dinner as usual. Sue and Dick were in Texas, and some of the grandchildren had other places to go but came by later. Now Bertha and I are eating leftovers. By the time Christmas is over, we'll have enough to last us until spring and we won't want ham or turkey for another year.

Harrison and Marg we hope you had a nice trip to California, and Marg we hope your surgery was successful and that your recovery will be speedy. We wish the same to any others who have been ill.

We have had a real nice fall; haven't had but two or three night where the temperature was in the 20s, but then it warmed up during the day. We have raked lots and lots of leaves. I see that my jonquils are coming up and my forsythia is blooming like maybe an early spring but I think that is wishful thinking. We usually have our worst weather after the first of the year. I can hardly believe that 1994 is almost over.

Bertha talked to the Mondys and the Reasons just before Thanksgiving and all were doing real well. I had a short letter from Cona and she is still up and going. She holds down her job in Memphis and makes weekly trips to Pocahontas to visit with her sister Dorothy. (Cona is 84 years old and still working!)

Son Buster and the boys went deer hunting and he got an eight-point buck. The boys did not do so well. He was proud of himself. Had the deer ground up in deer-meat burgers. He gets a deer almost every year. There were lots of deer killed in Missouri this year. I don't care much for the meat. Grandson Scott got a deer and a turkey. They are allowed one turkey with their deer tag.

Time to hit the hay. Love to everyone, Bessie and Bertha.

[Thanks for your letters.]

When Brecken was about 15 she had to write a short story. She chose to write one based on Abraham. I have had a copy of it for a long time and when Cecl was here he read it and insisted I put in in the Chronicle. I am including it in this issue. I hope you read it and enjoy it.

* * * * *

This is the land of promise -- if you don't believe it, listen to the politicians.

* * * * *

El Ninos are caused by an increase of the surface water temperature in the western Pacific. If el nino developes, it upsets the weather pattern all over the world, causing floods in some areas and droughts in others. It appears that an el nino condition is developing and the weather men are watching it closely. If I hear about it I'll let you know. It only needs a rise in temperature of a couple of degrees or so.

* * * * *

Be on the look-out for the kook religious cults that will be springing up in the next few years. They will be preaching that the end is here. There were hundreds of them when the year 1000 approached and thousands sold their lands and refused to plant crops ---many starved to death. Preachers got rich. And they will this time too. Most of them will claim the scriptures for their predictions. Just quote Matt. 24:36. That ought to do it.

* * * * *

I haven't heard from Old Ornerly lately but I'm sure I will when he gets my Christmas present. It is such a lovely one, -- expensive too. (Now let me tell you something, -- Old Ornerly financed many copies of the Chronicle this year and though he didn't want me to say anything about it, I am telling you anyway. He is a wonderful brother-in-law despite our constant wrangling which is all in fun.)

* * * * *

I have finally gotten all my Christmas cards written, addressed, and stamped and I will take them to the PO tomorrow the 7th. Now I know you think I cheated, and maybe you are right. I

did them on the computer. Saved me a lot of money. Of course you didn't get the benefit of Marg's eagle eye so there are a lot of misspelled words but I think you can live with them.

* * * * *

I hear Santa has gone to computers and keeps his record on one. I'm afraid the IRS is going to tap his program and find out who has been naughty or nice or what we received for Christmas and charge us extra tax on it. Better get hold of Newt, maybe he can do something about it.

Got a card from Ava Pickett, one of the first 17 members of the Chronicle Family saying she has moved to 701 Carroll Street, Pocahontas, AR72455. She has sold her farm and bought a brick 3-BR home.

Card from Bill and Jean Monday -- they are on their way to visit their oldest in Leesburg, FL.

Card from Cona saying that she has been spending a lot of time visiting Dorothy who is in a nursing home in Pocahontas. When Mom lived there before going to Colo. Dorothy used to visit her frequently. I was there once when she came.

My favorite Christmas movies are; *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *A Christmas Visitor*, (filmed in Australia) and Alec Guinness's Musical *Scrooge*. They'll be on TV, I hope. I have copies of them (and have already watched them). This is my favorite time of year and I watch every good Christmas show I can.

I don't think we will have to dream of a White Christmas -- looks like the clouds are on the way

If I don't get to put out another issue this year, I hope all of you have a Glorious Christmas and a New Year filled with Excitement, Happiness, Peace and lots and lots of Love.

I
LOVE
YOU
ALL
HARRISON

ABRAHAM

BRECKEN JAIE ARMSTRONG

"THOU HAST NOT WITHHELD THY SON, THINE ONLY SON, FROM ME" Gen. 22:12

Sara looked out of the kitchen window at her husband. He was wandering around aimlessly in their backyard, a new habit that he seemed to have just picked up. She stood at the sink, her hands immersed in the warm, soapy water washing the crystal platter that her mother-in-law had given her three Christmases ago. She was going to use it to serve fried chicken tonight to the Robinsons, their long time family friends whom they invite over to dinner almost every weekend.

He is going to get cold out there, she thought, as she watched her husband, the brown and red leaves falling around him in the slight breeze that summoned winter. She could see the rustling of his white starched shirt as he shivered in the cold. His necktie, that usually hung perfectly straight, was loosened at the collar and the brown leather belt that held up his black, pressed trousers was let out two or three notches. He must have had a hard day, she noted, as she grabbed the dishrag to dry the platter in her hands.

Glancing out of the louvered panes of glass again, she saw her husband kick at a pile of leaves that the gardeners had forgotten to pick up before they left that day. It seems that regardless of how often they picked up the leaves, there were always more falling and the yard was always a mess. Sara saw the perpetual flashing of a red light near his waist. There it hung, from his waist, like a leash able to jerk him away from her with every flash. She hadn't noticed that he had gotten a beeper. He must have just gotten it today....

A sharp buzz woke her from her trance. As she ran to get the door, she noticed that she still had the dishrag in her hands. She stuffed it into her pocket and opened the door to see Tom and Linda standing on the porch, each holding several platters in their arms. They were each bundled up like Eskimos with matching navy blue down parkas that had real coyote fur around the hood. She could never understand how they could tell the jackets apart, or for that matter, why they wanted to dress alike. Linda had once said that wearing identical clothes made them feel

closer, like more of a couple. Maybe Bob and I should try that, Sara thought; anything that works.

"Sara, my dear, it is absolutely frigid out there." The Robinsons stormed in the door around her, stuffing platters into her outstretched arms.

Linda dutifully kissed her on the cheek, smiled so that her white teeth gleamed in the dim hall light, and started unbundling. First the jacket came off, then a thin wind and water repellent poncho, then a pair of ear muffs, a scarf that her grandmother had knitted for her twenty years ago, a pair of brown suede gloves, a sweatshirt, and finally that pair of after-ski boots that she had bought in Lake Tahoe two years ago because they were on sale, despite the fact that she doesn't ski. Linda, Sara laughed to herself, always believes in being prepared. Tom stripped off the jacket and wandered into the kitchen with two of the platters muttering about the fact that his back hurt because he had thrown it out on Thursday mowing the lawn.

Linda relieved Sara of the rest of the platters, "Well, I brought potato salad, a green salad for Bob, because I know he doesn't like potatoes, those Christmas cookies that you love so much, and some sourdough bread that I picked up at the store on the way over."

They wandered into the kitchen to put the food down. Linda started rustling through drawers finding the right serving utensils, chattering away in her usual high pitched tone. Sara sat down at the kitchen table with a glass of wine, staring out of the window at her husband and Tom, who had found his way into the backyard. They had both stuffed their hands in their pockets, and were staring at the ground, shuffling their heavy feet as they walked through the leaves. They look like little boys, Sara thought.

"The food is ready!" Linda screamed out the back door, summoning the men from the backyard. Everyone moved into the dining room, each carrying platters of food and drinks, took their regular places around the large oak table, and started to eat.

"So how is Bobby?" Linda asked. Bobby was their only child. Despite the fact that he was eighteen and six feet one inch tall, Linda could still only picture him as the six year old child that he was when she first met him.

"Oh, Bobby is fine." Bob replied. "He's out on his first date with this new girl that he likes. What's her name?" He asked Sara.

"Julie," Sara replied. "Yea, they went to dinner and the movies. She sounds like a nice girl, and she's real pretty."

"He asked for money, of course." Bob cut in, "I told him that he needs to get a job if he's going to have a girl."

"Speaking of jobs, how's your new job? Heard you're really dedicated to it, leaving early in the morning and coming home late at night." Tom asked.

"Yea, it's a great job. The hours are long but it's worth it. I have to leave about six every morning and I often don't get home until eight or nine at night. As vice-president of the company, I have to set a good example for the rest of the employees. Did I tell you about my boss, the president? The man is incredible! He can close a deal in two days; it usually takes me a week, if I'm lucky...."

Sara's mind wandered. It was always the same; he would launch into a speech about his boss for ten minutes, describing his boss' house, his boss' wife, his boss' dedication to the company, but especially how much his boss favored him in every issue that came up within the company. Finally someone would interrupt him with a question or comment and the discussion would deviate to another subject. Sara looked at her husband. Though he was, in appearance, the same distraught man that she had seen pacing around the backyard, he was revitalized now that he was talking about work. It always seemed that way; he wasn't satisfied unless he was working.

"Yes, well I'm going on a business trip for about five days next week. I'm leaving tomorrow. Going to New York to close a fifty million dollar deal with a large law firm there. The Boss is putting me up in one of the nicest hotels there and I get limo service to and from the conference center every day. I'll be gone until Thursday so I can't go golfing with you on Wednesday, Tom."

"Hey, that's fine. Sounds like this deal is really important for your firm," Tom replied.

"Yea, it is. It's also very important for my career because it is the first multi-million dollar deal that I've handled. If I do well, I've got a chance at promotion. The Boss has mentioned the possibility of me being in charge of this new branch of the company. Of course I would still be reporting to him, but I would have my own little niche in the company..."

"Wait, you're going to be gone for the Benefit." Sara broke in, "It's on Tuesday night. I've told you about this for three months. You know how hard I have worked on this and how much it means to me. And you promised that nothing would prevent you from going. How could you do that! Now I have to find someone to be the host for me. And on top of that, you'll miss Bobby's game on Monday."

"I'm sorry, honey. It must have slipped my mind."

She sighed and got up to clear the dishes. It was useless to argue with him; nothing would ever change his mind once he had decided to do something. Linda followed her into the kitchen to prepare the cookies while the men slipped out to the porch to smoke.

"Well, it seems like Bob really likes his new job," Linda mumbled.

"Yea, he does. That new boss of his is all that he talks about. When ever Bob is home, which is rare now-a-days, The Boss is the only name that I hear escape his lips. He practically worships that guy. I think that if he asked Bob to jump off a cliff, he would."

Linda looked uncomfortable, grabbed the plate of cookies and went back to the living room to put them down.

Later on that evening, after the dishes were done and the house was dark, Sara sat down at the kitchen table with a cup of hot coffee. The Job was all that Bob had talked about recently. She was convinced that that was all he truly cared about. He hadn't even bothered to tell her that he was going away until tonight. As soon as the Robinsons had left for the evening, he had gone upstairs, packed, and gone to bed, barely saying a word to her. She looked around

the dark kitchen, its shadows distorting the images of the things that she knew so well. As her eyes glanced over the clock, she saw that it was 11:45. Bobby was scheduled to be home at midnight so she decided to wait up for him.

Sara slowly rose and walked over to the sink. She placed her empty coffee cup in the sink and started toward the living room when the telephone rang. Picking it up, expecting it to be her son, telling her that he would be late, she heard an unfamiliar voice on the other end.

"Hello," the voice said, "is this Mrs. Bowman?"

"Yes," Sara replied hesitantly. Her heart started to pound. She knew what it was. She could hear the excited buzzing on the other end of the line, behind the deep, mysterious voice. She could hear the sounds of a busy office behind him. What kind of a place would be that busy at midnight on a Saturday night? She knew it; a cold, numb feeling started to creep over her body and she started to shake from that coldness. Not because it was cold in her house but because her heart had suddenly turned to ice. She managed to say again, "Yes, I am Sara Bowman."

"I am sorry Mrs. Bowman but I have some bad news for you. I regret to inform you that your son, Robert Bowman Jr., has been involved in an accident. He was hit broadside by a drunk driver. I think that you better come to the hospital as soon as possible."

"Yes, thank you," Sara gasped. She suddenly felt dizzy and nauseous as she stumbled through the house, tripping over chairs and cords that seemed to keep getting in her way. Each stair seemed an eternity; she finally reached her bedroom, flung the door open to find her snoring husband sprawled over the bed. Flinging herself toward him, she clutched his arm, shaking it, crying out for him to wake up. Jumping out of slumber, he demanded what was wrong. She brokenly mumbled, "Bobby... hospital... accident..." and collapsed on the floor.

The next thing she knew, she was crumpled into the passenger seat of their car. She looked over to see her husband, his hair flying in the wind. He had his window open, though it was very cold outside. She could see in the moonlight that he still wore the T-shirt that he had slept in and had pulled on some pants. She was not used to seeing him like that; in fact, she hadn't seen him in anything but business clothes in a very long time. He looked very different, she

thought, almost like a real father. She looked at his face and saw a pained expression there. Sensing that she had revived, he looked over at her and smiled. She could see the tears in his eyes. They didn't say a word the whole time as they were racing through the empty streets to the hospital.

The two of them went into the lobby of the hospital together and approached the nurse at the desk in front of them. Even though it was past midnight, the nurse was not tired as any normal person might be. Her mascara was as thick as pencil lead and her frosty pink lipstick was painted on. She turned her bleached blond head towards them and smiled a great big smile, showing off every one of her crooked teeth.

"Hello, may I help you," she cooed.

"Yes, um, we're here about Bobby Bowman," Bob stuttered.

The smile quickly faded from the nurse's plastic face. Sara looked at her husband, now in the light. He had tucked in his T-shirt, and combed his hair. He no longer appeared distressed, in fact he was very calm, with a serene, painted expression on his face. Attached to his waist, once again was the beeper, with its flashing red light...

"Follow me, please." A new nurse approached and led them to a small waiting room with two couches and a chair in it. Bob, although he had seemed different in the car, now appeared to be the same man that he had always been. He sat stiffly in the chair without saying a word. Sara went to the window and looked out onto the street. It had started to rain and the pavement was wet. It glistened in the light cast by the headlights of cars that passed every now and then.

Several minutes passed and there was a knock on the door. A doctor entered, dressed in a white frock. He introduced himself as Doctor Gilbert.

"Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, I am very sorry about your son. He is in surgery right now. We are trying to steady his heart rate and make sure that there is no extensive damage to his heart. I will try to keep you informed on any change in his condition."

Sara glanced over at Bob who was still sitting in the chair beside her. His painted expression had not changed at all; he merely nodded at the doctor and then picked up the latest copy of *People* Magazine.

He was no longer the man that she had once loved. The Job and The Boss had replaced her and Bobby in his eyes and despite how much he said he loved them, they were secondary in his life. A faint beeping noise caught her attention and led her gaze down to his belt. As it had always threatened before, the leash was dragging him in. He hopped up and ran to the pay phone on the wall. Dropping a quarter in, he dialed the number on the beeper.

"Hello, Boss. It's Bob. You called?"

Sara could hear the buzz of the person on the other end of the line. Stepping closer, she could understand the words.

"I heard about your son, Bob and I'm really sorry. I do hope that he is all right. I was actually calling to say that we will send a car over to the hospital to pick you up there so that you can spend as much time with your son as possible."

"Well actually, Boss," Bob said in a scared voice, "I was wondering if there was anyway that I could postpone my departure for New York until tomorrow. I would like to stay with my son for a little while, at least."

"Well, I'm sorry, Bob, but you know as well as I do how important this deal is to the firm. You are the only one who I trust with the task. He might be cheating you out of a promotion but I guess, if I really have to, I could send Frank Marshall..."

"I'll be ready when the car gets here."

"Good boy. My driver will see you in about ten minutes."

Bob hung up the phone and sat back down in the chair. From behind the *People* Magazine, he muttered, "I'll be leaving in about ten minutes."

As Bob was getting up to leave, the door opened. Rushing to Dr. Gilbert, Sara demanded to know Bobby's condition.

"Well," the doctor started, "he is out of surgery but is in very grave condition. His will to live is the only thing that will save him. He is delirious but calling for his father." The doctor turned towards Bob, "If you would like to follow me, sir, I will take you to his room."

"I am sorry, but I can't. I must leave right now if I am going to catch my plane to New York," he explained.

"Please Bob, if you truly love your son, you would stay with him when he needed you most, rather than running off to the beck and call of your boss." Sara begged, "Please Bob, call your boss and tell him that you must stay. Do it for your son, and do it for me."

Bob looked up into his wife's eyes. "I'm doing this for you and Bobby. I have to go." Gathering his jacket, he walked out the door.

Following the doctor down the hall, Sara glanced back and watched as Bob scuffled down the hall.

The beeper had finally done it. It had taken him away when he was needed most. Sara turned back around and followed the doctor down the long white hallway.

[I have made no corrections to Brecken's story. She supplied it to me on a floppy, and except for formatting it for two column display, this is it. It was written near her 16th birthday. hcm]