

The Bandera PROPHEET

November 7, 2019

Homebound

By Elena Tucker
Special to the Prophet

His name is Murphy, and, like Willie Nelson, his beauty is a matter of debate. Without making any direct allusions to the all-too-obvious lyrics, he also likes to be on the road. Again. He loves a good car ride. There's something about the radiance on an ugly dog's face that brightens an otherwise dismal day. If we would let him, he'd live in the back seat of my faltering blue van, staring out the window at whatever it is canines find fascinating along the sides of the road. Casket deliverers, white pickups, strip malls...nothing is beneath his notice. We take him into San Antonio, where he and I while away the time outside of various clothing stores while the youngest teenager gets her browsing fix.

I hate to shop. It's probably second on my list of Hated Things To Do, just under squashing cockroaches. But Murphy doesn't mind. He entertains himself by making wet smudge patterns on the window with his nose as he watches happy shoppers come and go. Most youngsters are accompanied by their willing mothers. Murphy watches for our youngest teenager to emerge alone. I pretend not to feel guilty and turn a page in my book. Occasionally I fire up the car to warm us up. Or crack the window when the doggy smell starts to plug my pores. I'm not crazy about going into the Big City either. It's too far away. This isn't a new phenomenon for me. In our previous community I didn't venture too far afield either. What is a jaunt down to the 7-Eleven for anybody else practically requires a stamped visa in my

passport. I plan my life carefully so that I stay within a one-mile radius of the house.

You think I'm exaggerating again.

This has nothing to do with traveling. I love to travel. I've lived in many different countries, in almost as many hemispheres as you can slice the globe. I love airplanes. I love trains and buses. Cars are tolerable, except for my old van for which I have a most peculiar and almost spiritual love. Really. But I don't take it too far from home. I don't like traffic. I don't like the insanity that hurtles most Texans down I-10, desecrating a landscape that cries for a slower pace. Like a mule train, perhaps. Or a matched team and buggy. I plod along at my customary fifty-five, because that's what the speed limit was when I moved away. I'm resistant to change.

My wants are simple...a fact that disgusts my children. They are consumers whose hunger is more readily fed down that long scary stretch of highway, off a terrifying exit ramp, in a maze of cement and commercialism and sale signs and vast parking lots.

Which is where Murphy and I while away the time.

I turn another page in my book. He makes another mark with his ugly, wet nose and backs away in satisfaction. There.

Tic-tac-toe.

Three in a row.

Maybe we can go home soon.