

Retriever saves the day for sextuplets

KINGMAN (AP) — Carol Gunn is disappointed she has yet to find one item on her Christmas shopping list: a dog collar bearing a “Hero” medallion.

It’s for Queenie.
“She’s just a hero in my eyes,” said Gunn of the 2 1/2-year-old, 84-pound Chesapeake Bay retriever whose determination helped rescue Gunn.

Gunn only has to look at her right thumb to be reminded of that fall afternoon in the garage of her Kingman home.

Improbably, the sextuplets, born in April 2002 to Sondra and Eldon Headrick, Rago, take a back seat — literally and figuratively — in this story.

Gunn is a friend of the family and among the volunteers who started pitching in when the Headricks brought the babies home.

“They’re kind of my surrogate grandchildren,” Gunn said.

On Sept. 30, Gunn drove the six

children — in the Headrick’s 12-passenger van outfitted with six baby car seats — to her home for a day of play.

About 4:30 p.m., Gunn buckled Grant, Ethan, Sean, Melissa, Jaycie and Danielle into their seats and turned the key in the ignition.

“The babies are saying, ‘The door, the door. You didn’t shut the door,’” Gunn said.

Gunn hopped out, hurried around the back of the van, and shoved the back edge of the van’s sliding door forward. It shut on her right thumb, locked.

She could open the front passenger door, she said, but could not unlock the sliding door.

At 5-foot-2, Gunn’s eyes and nose rose above the window. Jaycie was seated just inside.

“OK now, try to get your shoulders outside of the harness,” Gunn said she coaxed Jaycie.

Jaycie tried, but success was limited. Meanwhile, the other children

talked, occasionally looking at Gunn.

Gunn had cleaned the garage recently, so there was nothing nearby to grab. Her cell phone was in her purse in the van. No one was expected home until 10:30 at night. Her cul-de-sac home was rather isolated, and neighbors weren’t home.

How long could her thumb tissue survive? Should she try to chew her thumb off? Who could hear a shout on the especially windy day?

She yelled for help.

Working in her garden, a long block south and then east of the Gunn home, Betty Jean Patterson heard noises that sounded like a cat fight, but her cats were OK.

Queenie, however, was very unsettled.

Patterson works with the Kingman Humane Society. She had adopted Queenie, a previous victim of abuse who had suffered from a broken leg, stab wounds and head wounds.

“She would run toward the sound and come back to me,” Patterson said. “She would not give up.”

“She just kept prancing around me and whining,” Patterson said.

“I threw my tools down, and zip, she was ahead of me,” Patterson said.

“She led me across a field and at this point, I heard a lady screaming, ‘Help me, help me,’” Patterson said.

“This lady pokes her head around the corner,” Gunn recalled. “It was like a mirage. I didn’t expect anybody to come.”

Gunn estimates her thumb was trapped about 20 to 25 minutes. The bone did not break, but bending the thumb is still painful today.

Gunn is grateful for Patterson’s care and for Queenie’s persistence.

Patterson is proud of Queenie and said she rewarded her with a box of special dog cookies and repeated praise of “Good dog, good dog.”

“She ate about half of the box,” Patterson said with a chuckle.

Card Shower



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Curtis and Kathy Cayton recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on Sunday. Belated cards may reach the couple at: 555 W. 3rd, Colby, Kan. 67701.

Kansas family based on ‘Yours, Mine and Ours’

COTTONWOOD FALLS (AP) — Germaine Anderson of Cottonwood Falls grew up knowing fame and became used to sharing her life and her family with photographers and reporters.

Anderson, whose family name is Beardsley, was the 14th oldest of 20 kids in her household. Her family’s life was portrayed in a 1968 movie, “Yours, Mine and Ours,” starring Lucille Ball and Henry Fonda. The movie recently was remade and is in theaters now.

“Yours, Mine and Ours” was patterned after the book “Who Gets the Drumstick?” written by Anderson’s second mother, Helen Beardsley. Anderson commented on the title of the book.

“When everyone wants the drumstick, who gets it?” she said about having to share the drumstick with so many siblings.

The book offered a peek into the family of Frank Beardsley and Helen North Beardsley. They were married on Sept. 9, 1961, after they both were widowed.

Frank Beardsley had 10 children, including Anderson, and Helen North had eight children when they married. Later, they had two chil-

dren together, making a grand total of 20 children, Anderson said. They lived in Carmel, Calif.

Anderson pointed out some similarities in her family. Both her mothers had the same china and both her mothers were nurses. In the book, Helen Beardsley also noted the similarities.

“It was strange to think there had been another woman who was so like me in appearance, taste, background and experience,” Beardsley wrote in her book. “... We both went to school and were married in Seattle, trained as nurses in the same hospital, married Navy men and had large families.”

Anderson, who was 4 when her parents married, said she was 11 when the original movie was made and they had the chance to meet Ball a time or two. Ball even paid for the family to spend a day at Disneyland.

“She was really nice,” Anderson said.

Anderson said she didn’t really think much of all the attention at the time.

“It always seemed normal to me,” she said. “Mom was on all the talk shows.”

After the movie’s premiere, tour

“My dad was a Navy man so things were organized. We didn’t really fight or anything.”

Germaine Anderson,
member of family portrayed in movie

buses would go by the family’s home and people would ask for autographs when they were out.

Frank Beardsley would encourage the kids to go on the porch and wave at people driving by, Anderson recalled. The family also was featured in Life magazine. Anderson recalled having pen pals she wrote to, and the family was in a Langendorf Bread Co. commercial, which was filmed in their home.

So what was life like with that many siblings? The family lived in an eight-bedroom, five-bathroom house, which had to be added onto after Helen North moved in with her eight children. Anderson said she shared her room with five sisters.

“It was a huge house,” Anderson said.

Mealtime with a large family was

an event, she said. The family sat down together for their meals. Food had to be delivered by the semi-truck load. Anderson recalled pouring 50-pound bags of sugar into a large drawer after receiving it.

Even though the family was large, they didn’t see each other as much as one might expect. Their parents owned three shops. The kids were put to work and they were all constantly going their own ways. Even when everybody was together, they got along, Anderson said.

“My dad was a Navy man so things were organized,” she said. “We didn’t really fight or anything.”

With such a large family, there wasn’t time for much individual attention.

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