

Grandfather's Wish



Chapter Eight by Kay Hively

It took a week to shear all the sheep. When the job was done, the Sanchez family made ready for its trip to town. They would sell the wool, attend the special mass, and go to the fiesta. Miguel and his brothers were excited about going to town.

One evening after supper, Senora Sanchez told her sons about the Blessing of the Animals. She said it was an old custom for people to take their animals once a year to the mission for a blessing. Miguel's youngest brother, Alberto, asked if he could take his puppy. Juan said he would take his baby chicken.

Miguel said nothing about the blessing, but he wondered if he could take all his lambs.

The day before the family left for town, Miguel worked in the barn. Using leather strings and poles he had cut along the nearby stream, he built a cage. If he was going to take his lambs to the fiesta, he would have to keep them penned in the wagon.

The next morning the wagon was piled high with wool, but everyone found a place to sit. Miguel rode in the back of the wagon, holding onto his cage.

He also had a leather pouch filled with milk for the lambs.

After three hours the family arrived in town. The streets and buildings had been decorated for the fiesta. Senor Sanchez went straight to the wool buyer and made his sale. Then it was time for the special mass. Miguel and his brothers took their animals to the church and stood in a long line waiting their turn.

Classroom Extensions Things to Think About and Do -

- A. Why did Miguel take milk for his lambs? Why did the family cover the wagon with branches?
- B. Sheep provide both wool and meat. What is mutton? What is veal?

STANDARDS – G3:2; G4:7; S3; H/PE2

Most of the animals were dogs, but one man had brought a milk cow. A young girl in front of Miguel had a kitten, and one boy had a hog for the Padre to bless. Only Miguel had sheep, and they were making a terrific noise in their cage.

The Padre blessed the animals outside the church, then everyone went inside for the mass. Animals were not allowed inside, so they were left outside in cages or tied to a tree. Using leather straps, Alberto and Juan tied their animals to a post behind the church.

After mass, the Sanchez family put the animals back in the wagon and covered the wagon box with branches. For their lunch, Senor Sanchez bought tortillas from an old woman who was selling them in the street. Then everyone went to the fiesta.



All afternoon, Miguel and his brothers played games and dodged the fireworks that were thrown in the streets. There were pinatas to break and music for dancing. The three boys also competed in foot races. Miguel's parents spent the afternoon talking with friends and relatives.

Finally, as the sun was sinking low, it was time to go home. Miguel loaded his cage into the wagon and then climbed in with it. He was very tired, but also very happy. Mostly Miguel was happy that his lambs had been blessed. He hoped the blessing would bring good fortune. For Miguel, good fortune meant that one day he would have a flock of Navajo-Churro sheep – in keeping with his grandfather's wishes.

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation with support from Verizon Foundation. Copyright 2002.