

## MOUSEKETEERING, 2001 - Marilyn Nease - TX

*Snap!* From under the kitchen sink came the sound. With “What do we do now?” looks, my mother-in-law, Harriet, and I stared at each other. We were “mouseketeering”—and inexperienced.

When I’d arrived a few days earlier, Harriet told me she needed help with a project. Harriet’s announcements of this sort often led into “unknown territory.” I could end up unmolding a Jell-O salad, hoping it landed in one piece in its cluster-of-grapes shape. Or I’d be slicing a ham or turkey, praying the meat wouldn’t look mutilated by some Halloween chainsaw killer. Still, I always said yes to Harriet’s requests because I’d been blessed with the world’s best mother-in-law.

However, I felt nervous when she said a mouse had slipped into her home and left deposits in cabinets and closets. She hadn’t had a mouse problem before because she’d always had a cat. Guilt energized me to enlist for duty: she hadn’t adopted another cat after her last one died, due to my allergy. As her mouse would soon be, I was trapped.

How to begin? Poison would endanger her dog and mine. Baited sticky-paper tunnel traps, where we’d find a mouse struggling in glue, sounded awful. We settled on a standard spring-shut, quick-kill mousetrap baited with cheese—as in cartoons.

I baited a new Wal-Mart trap with cheddar cheese and set the spring release. For two days the mouse ate cheese, and the trap didn’t spring. I’d outsmart it with peanut butter (sticky, can’t snatch it and run, must stay and lick it, spring the trap, no more mouse). Plan B failed. We needed a better trap. Harriet’s neighbor Clara rescued us with an old one she had. I baited Clara’s trap with bacon and tied it on with sewing thread. Outwitting this wily mouse was an assignment I would complete!

Clara’s trap had a more sensitive trigger: I “trapped” my finger trying to set the spring. Ouch! Holding my breath, I placed the bacon-tied-on-with-thread, super-sensitive-spring trap under the kitchen sink and closed the cabinet door.

Now and then, we opened that door to peek inside. Just the untouched trap. This mouse was a tough foe!

Next morning I stood at the kitchen sink filling a glass with water when I heard the *snap!* After several frozen seconds, Harriet and I leaned over, she behind—“You go first. I’m right here.” I opened the cabinet door. In semi-darkness, I saw a limp, gray-brown, furry body and a black eye staring blankly. Feeling more murderer than victor, I drew back. How to deal with the deceased?

Harriet offered to hold a trash can. I lifted the trap by a corner and dropped it in. We scrunched our faces into “Eeeewwww!” expressions and danced about squeamishly.

Word must have gotten out: no more mice invasions. A fan of the Robert Burns poem “To a Mouse,” I remain haunted by that eye’s ghostly stare. I hope Burns greeted our wee foe kindly when it arrived in the next life.