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Background:

Frequently-asked questions about the Book

What's the full title?

"Mr. Gonopolis And His 12 Holsteins -- A Christmas Story" This is the 20th anniversary edition of its first commercial publication. It was actually written a year before that as a Christmas gift for Uncle Hyggly's six nephews and nieces.

Where can the book be found?

Autographed copies of "Mr. Gonopolis And His 12 Holsteins -- A Christmas Story" are available direct from the author at www.woundedcoot.com. The book is also available at Amazon.com.

Is it in bookstores?

It's in a few independent stores, but Hyggly decided to bypass the large chains this time and go direct to his fans -- something that wasn't as easy to do before the popularity of the Internet.

What was the inspiration for the story?

It started simply as a story Hyggly would entertain his nephews and nieces. They would ask what Santa was bringing them for Christmas and Hyggly would tease "Didn't you hear? Santa can't come this year -- he has a cold, and he sending some old farmer in his place. And he doesn't bring toys, all he brings is underwear and socks!"

What is the meaning of the story?

It's a simple story of values -- helping out a friend -- putting forth your best effort -- persevering through adversity. After a series of comic misadventures, the meaning is summed up by what Santa tells Mr. Gonopolis -- "It's not the gifts that you give, it's the LOVE that you show."

Where did the name "Gonopolis" come from?

It was just a silly made-up name that Hyggly came up with. One of his nieces could never pronounce it and everyone would laugh as she mangled it. The name just stuck.

What ethnic background is Mr. Gonopolis?

Even though it sounds Greek, Hyggly grew up in a very Scandinavian community (his mother was full Norwegian) and the humor springs from that self-effacing, gentle heritage. Gonopolis' first name, "Ole", is VERY Norwegian. Gonopolis is an "everyman" or "everywoman" for that matter) however, and serves any ethnicity a particular reader wants to bring to it.

Schools have performed the story as a Christmas paegant, and some have gone so far as to change parts of the story. How does Hyggly feel about that?

Hyggly views Gonopolis as a modern-day folk story, and doesn't mind artistic license when it's adapted. Catholic schools have been drawn to the book, but work the Nativity into it when performed on stage. One even renamed the cows to give it a flavor for their region.

Is the story today the same as it was when first published?

No, the story has seen evolution by Hyggly himself. The essential story remains the same, but several passages were changed in the new edition aimed at making it more accessible for very young reader (a bit de-Bullwinkleized).

The illustrations have changed dramatically from chicken scratches in the homemade version, through the more fully-fleshed black and white drawings in the 5th anniversary edition. The new 20th anniversary edition is the most dramatic change from the original, going to full-color double-spread illustrations throughout, and in hard cover for the first time.

Is the story in the audio version identical to the book?

Nearly, but not quite. In the spirit of the folk story mentality, Hyggly made a couple small tweaks in the audio version -- one suggested by musician George Maurer -- that might make their way into a future print edition.

Why is there an audio version?

After Mr. Gonopolis first appeared in print, Hyggly was approached by composer/performer George Maurer, who at that time was a student at St. John's University just

south of Lake Woebgon (whose tales were first told on SJU's radio station). He played Hyggly a theme song he wrote for Gonopolis and nailed it! Through the audio version, the characters come to life a way they can't through the printed page.

Why is Hyggly's publishing company called "Wounded Coot Greetings?"

The town Hyggly grew up in, Ashby Minnesota, has a local sportspersons group that calls themselves "Coots Unlimited" in a tongue-in-cheek reference to the national Ducks Unlimited organization. The coot is a very awkward, dumb cousin to a duck -- and tastes so bad that no self-respecting hunting dog would pick one up in its mouth. Hyggly thought the only thing more pathetic than a coot would be a "wounded" coot, so created his trademark character of a coot with a cast on one leg. When he first was getting into publishing he was going to do greeting cards, which were to have the slogan "For when you don't quite care enough to send the very best" as a tweak at Hallmark,

And the rest, is history!

For more information, visit the Web site at www.woundedcoot.com.