

The Christmas Gator Rules

By Warren Swenson

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In east Texas there's a famous school
Down on the Rio Grande
Whose graduates are well known
As the best trained in the land
But I'm sure you never met someone
Who has graduated
From this famous school
Because they're all alligators.

The founder of this famous school
Was Big Tuson himself
His cofounder was none other than
His best friend Chanelle.
Now Big Tuson and Chanelle
Were both highly esteemed
Leaders on Papa Noel's
Famous Christmas Gator team.

Opening a school like this had
Always been their dream.
A place to teach young gators
What it really means
To be a Christmas gator.
Which is more than speed and size.
A Christmas gator must also be
Courageous, kind and wise.

Now there wasn't any doubt
And no one could deny
The fact that Big Tuson and Chanelle
Were certainly qualified
To teach the gator boys and girls
How they could become
A famous Christmas gator
Even though, when they were young,
Down in southeast Texas,
There weren't any schools
They could attend that would teach them
The Christmas Gator Rules.

With no one there to teach them
You may be wondering how did they
Became the famous Christmas gators
That they are today.

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Well, I love to tell their story
So, I'll share it with you, then
You'll know how it was and where it was
That their journey all began.

I understand the Rio Grande
Was where they both grew up
Things were not easy for Tuson
When he was just a pup.
It seems his feet were much too big
His tail was much too long
Which made things rather awkward
For poor little Tuson.

Now what made matters even worse
If worse matters could be
He wasn't simply awkward
Tuson was real clumsy.
It seems no matter where he went
When he would turn around
He'd swing his tail and always knock
Something or someone down.

Tuson would try to hide his tail
By wearing clothes too long.
So, all the gator boys and girls
Would make fun of Tuson.
When he would pass, he'd hear them laugh
And see them making faces.
They would tell him, "You're too clumsy
To run in the gator races."

If I said all the gator boys and girls
Then I was wrong
There was one gator who never
Made fun of young Tuson.
She became Tuson's best friend
And, of course, that was Chanelle.
She was well mannered and polite
What we call a southern belle.

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Chanelle was also sleek and fast
And how she loved to race.
She cut through water like a shark
She had power, speed and grace.
There were no other gators
Who could keep up with her pace
So, every race that Chanelle ran
She would finish in first place.

Though Tuson loved to see her run
And take that victor's crown
He'd often look at his big feet
And shake his head and frown.
"I wish that I could run as fast as you."
He'd tell Chanelle.
But she would never let Tuson
Feel sorry for himself.

She would politely scold him saying,
"You listen here Tuson.
One day you'll grow as big and tall
As you tale is long.
And when you do you'll find
You'll be so powerful and strong
That everyone who knows you
Will call you Big Tuson."

And sure enough Chanelle was right
Tuson began to grow
And grow and grow and grow and grow
And grow and grow and grow
He grew to be as big and tall
As his tale was long
And no one even dared to think
Of teasing Big Tuson

He was Texas' greatest gator
He grew so much in strength and size.
That he could have forced those
Who once teased him to apologize.

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But he grew more than big and strong
He grew courageous kind and wise
He knew if he had forced them
To apologize
That he himself would have become
A bully much like them
And that was something Big Tuson
Would never let happen.
He rather choose to forgive those
Who treated him that way
And hoped somehow that they
Would have a change of heart one day.

The thought had never crossed his mind
When they opened up the school
To teach the gator boys and girls
The Christmas Gator Rules
That Chanelle and he would actually
Be teaching the children
Whose parents were the very gators
Who had once made fun of him.

When each of those student's parents
Finally realized
Who Tuson was, then one by one
They came to apologize.
But what was even more amazing
Is that most of them requested
That Big Tuson and Chanelle
Consider starting some night classes

For the parents of the students
Who were attending the school
So, they as well as their children
Could learn the Christmas Gator Rules.
After giving it some thought
Tuson and Chanelle agreed
To hold classes for the parents
And the classes would be free.

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So Tuson started teaching those
Who once made fun of him.
Not only winning their respect
But they all became good friends.
Now this would be a wonderful way
For this story to end
But things got even better than
Tuson could ever have imagined.

It wasn't long there after
When the time had come at last
That the school would have
It's very first graduating class.
They invited everyone to come
And everyone was there
The auditorium was packed
Without a single seat to spare

The graduates were all on stage
With the honored guest as well
The two guest speakers for that day
Were Mama and Papa Noel
When Papa Noel came to the podium
Mama Noel blew him a kiss
He smiled at her then turned
As he told the audience

"I made Mama Noel a promise
Much earlier this week
Her K-I-S-S Kiss means
Keep It Short and Sweet
Everyone in the audience laughed
As did Mama and Papa Noel.
He continued on to say,
"So I promised and so I shall.

You've heard it said
There's no Christmas without Papa Noel
But the very same thing can be said
About Mama Noel as well.
Without Mama Noel
Christmas would never be the same
Christmas without Mama Noel
Would be like a candle without a flame.

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Mama Noel is so very much
The heart and soul of Christmas
That I am but the wrapping paper
And Mama Noel is the gift
I guess what I am trying
To tell all of you is this
Without Mama Noel
It just wouldn't be Christmas.

So please welcome with me my sweetheart,
Known by some as Mrs. Claus"
As she stepped up to the podium
The auditorium exploded with applause.
She calmly raised her hand
And as she slowly brought it down
The applause quickly faded
Till you couldn't hear a sound.

What Mama Noel said that day
Still echos through the school
As she explained in words so plain
The Christmas Gator Rules.
"Loving is the way that life
Was meant to be lived
And giving is the greatest gift
That Christmas has to give.

When you give a part of yourself
To bless the life of someone else
The love that you have given them
Returns a hundred-fold again.
Though I'm certain all of us can't wait
For Christmas to get here
Christmas time serves to remind us
How we should live all year"

She slowly turned to face
The graduates seated on the stage
And in a voice both soft and firm
Continued on to say,
"You're to be congratulated
For the hard work you have done
You're off to such a good start
But your journey has just begun.

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Now the future is before you.
Just remember who you are
And the lessons you learned here
Will guide you just like the Christmas star.
Now Papa Noel and I have the honor
To hand to each of you your degree
But rather than have you come up here
Individually

I've heard that we have parents
Graduating with their children
And that is something, I am sure,
Very rarely happens.
So today I would like to do things
A little differently
Today when we call your names
We want you to come as families.

Once you each receive your degree
Then Papa Noel
Will inscribe upon your foreheads
A bright bronze Christmas bell
Which is the mark of a Christmas Gator
Of the first degree.
And after today that is what
Each of you will be.

When the final graduate left the stage
Then Papa and Mama Noel
Called up to the podium
Big Tuson and Chanelle.
Both of them were quite surprised
They did not understand.
What was about to happen next
Was not part of the program.

Papa Noel addressing both of them
Said, "It's very clear to see
How much both of you mean to this
Small community
Not only because of what you've done
But because of who you are.
Your lives shine bright like the guiding light
Of the golden Christmas Star.

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So earlier this year
At the North Pole there was held
A very special council
Of retired Papa Noels
And there we all decided
That there needed to be
The creation of a new rank
Christmas Gator third degree.

It was there further decided
That the two of you both are
To be the first awarded the mark
Of the Golden Christmas star
Which signifies you hold the rank
Christmas Gator third degree.
The honor has been given
To Mama Noel and to me

To bestow this rank upon you.
From this day forward you two are
To bear upon your foreheads
The mark of the golden Christmas Star.
Then Mama Noel placed her hand
On the forehead of Chanelle
And Papa Noel placed his hand
On Big Tuson's as well.

Then upon each of their foreheads
When their new rank was declared,
Where once was a silver Christmas tree
A golden star appeared.
Papa and Mama Noel hugged them both
Then told them, "We are sure,
Though you are the first, from this school
Will follow many more."

Though none of us can determine
How our journey will begin
Our choices and decisions
Determine how and where it ends.
Though none of us are gators
And we can't attend their school
We can all learn much by studying
The Christmas Gator Rules.

THE CHRISTMAS GATOR RULES

CHARACTER

When talent takes you to the top
You need to be aware
That character is the only thing
That will keep you there.

HUMBLE

The proud brag about their talent
But they fail to see
That talent is a gift that comes
With responsibilities
That can only be fulfilled with humility.

RESPECTFUL

Experience can teach you much
But fools learn from no other
The wise respect and learn by listening
To their coaches and instructors
(And their fathers and their mothers)

INSPIRATIONAL

When you face embrace adversity
Like the wind it will lift you higher
And others who are watching you
Will also be inspired
To follow your example
And they'll find out, when they try
By facing life's adversity
They too will learn to fly.

SINCERE

This simple story should make clear
The meaning of the word sincere
The ancient potters used melted wax
To cover flaws and fill the cracks.
They then would paint the pottery
So the cracks and flaws you could not see.
But those whose work were quality
And had no flaws or cracks
Would say that their work was sincere
Which meant it's without wax.

THANKFUL

Count your blessings not your losses
Always remembering
If your busy counting losses
You'll be losing your blessings.

MEEKNESS

Meekness is not weakness
As some think it to be
Meekness is strength and power
Submitting itself to authority.
Meekness does not and will not
Diminish your worth
It has been said it is the meek
Who will inherit the earth

AVAILABLE, APPROACHABLE

To be approachable you must be available
You must be present and you must be there
To believe otherwise is as foolish as to believe
You needn't be a rectangle in order to be a square
But just because you are a rectangle
Doesn't mean you are a square
Being approachable is more than being available
It is listening and showing that you care.

SUCCESSFUL

Success is never measured
By what you achieve yourself
But by what others can achieve
When they have your help