

Chapter 1 Dottie Pepper Dip-n-Dots

It was 1999 and a typical May morning in Tucson. In other words, the temperature was already in the 80s, with the expected high to “break the ice” around 2:00 p.m. “Breaking the ice” is how locals facetiously refer to the first day of the year when the temperature reaches 100 degrees.

Meteorologists predicted this milestone event would occur that afternoon. Tucsonans shake their heads as they mentally prepare for another long, sweltering, three-digit summer. They often defend their decision to live in this climate by declaring to the rest of the nation, “But, it’s a dry heat.”

A country song blasted from the radio of a mid-1980s era Ford truck as it zipped down East Broadway Blvd at 40 mph. The fatigued, middle-aged, woman behind the wheel attempted to harmonize with Wynonna as she kept up with the parade of morning traffic.

She’d been cruising along when suddenly, the right front tire unexpectedly dropped into a cavernous pothole that she’d failed to notice. The truck jolted almost immediately a second time as the rear wheel found the crater, rocking the chassis side-to-side like a teeter-tater.

A cargo of four small dogs was traveling untethered in the open truck bed behind her cab. When the tire plunged into that cavity, this tiny family of fawn-colored pugs, a mother and her three pups, was catapulted into the air as if tossed by a juggler.

Their bodies were launched and temporarily suspended mid-air. They gyrated frantically as they attempted to right themselves and land on their feet. Their efforts failed. The bitch, and two of her pups, smacked hard against the hot metal.

As if in slow motion, the third puppy was hurled in a high arc over the side panel and out of the vehicle. She was airborne for a few seconds before slamming hard into the hot, black, pavement, shattering her right hind leg.