

JUDY TOUPS' FRIENDS

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As you all know, Judy had many friends. Friends from here and friends from there, friends from just about everywhere. Because of people like Judy I feel that I know each and every one of her friends. Over the last 25 years I have spent many, many hours getting to know her friends, so I would like to share with you my knowledge about Judy's friends.

Now these friends would show up just about anytime they saw fit. Some showed up early, which usually got her all excited and some showed up late, which made her wonder what had happened to cause their tardiness. Then there were those that didn't even bother to come. Of course the ones that came that she didn't even know (that were coming from some unknown hole in the wall) really got her blood stirring. AND when one of her friends came into Mississippi for the first time.... well, this was the ultimate friendship. She would call all her local buddies just to come over and see this special friend and spend the rest of the day with them. What a true friend Judy was!

Her friends wore many different sets of attire. As a matter of fact some changed their clothing according to the season. The gaudiest suits were worn in Spring with special emphasis on her male friends. They would really dress up in their best attire, outdoing their mates hands down. Now some of her couple friends were really weird due to the fact that

they dressed almost identically. Go figure. Then there were several groups that were probably cousins or the like because they all dressed in drab colors like browns or grays or off-whites or drab streaky suits. It was really hard to keep up with their names. After Summer had passed, it seemed like many of her friends would come from all over and stop by with their children to see Judy, stay a couple of weeks and then off again to some far away place. Judy would tell everybody not to fret because they would stop back by again in several months with the children all grown up. She insisted that they had been doing that for as long as she could remember. When we first met Judy we all thought she was a little odd, but after several years had passed and her friends kept stopping and taking time in their travels to see her every year, we decided she knew exactly what she was talking about.

Some of the places she would take us to see her friends were along the beaches, out in the Mississippi Sound, on the islands, in the woods, in a park, along any roadside, in someone's backyard, AND as a matter of fact she had friends everywhere she went. Heck, she would take you to Texas just to show you the friends that she knew.

Some of them were quite shy and you had to be quick if you wanted to see them. Judy really wanted you to see them and would make funny noises of all sorts to entice them into view. Now we really thought she had gone off her rocker making those silly noises, BUT low and behold, her friends would come out into the open and pose for us. Over the years this method proved to be quite successful for anybody that tried it on their shy friends.

She would find a nice couple in some remote area and would tell the story that it was their first time to raise a family in Mississippi, and that they were really from points farther to the West. She had one small family of friends that was one of the most beautiful we had ever seen. Every time we visited Judy, she had to take us to see them. They weren't the easiest of her friends to find. Judy recognized their voices and would have to tell us where they were. Sure enough, if you looked long enough there they were. It would be well worth the effort.

Her friends wore a multitude of colors: some totally black, some totally white, some bright orange and black, some all red, some red and black, some with various amounts of blue and white, ones with yellow mixed with black and brown, some had red throats and black throats, some streaky brown and on and on. So MANY, BUT Judy could name each and every one just as if they were her own.

By now you should know who Judy's Friends were. They were THE BIRDS!!!! She absolutely LIVED Birds!!! She loved these feathered creatures more than life itself. I know for sure that every season that passes in the future, Judy's Friends, the world of birds, our fine-feathered friends, the avian world..... will miss her dearly. They will miss her pointing those binoculars in their direction as she related all she knew to some new OR experienced birder about what she was seeing. You have to believe her friends will be off their mark somewhat while approaching the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Because for years they HAD to have used Judy as a LANDMARK during migration!!!