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1997 January 1

A New Mexico Diary

1996 January 5: A long day of travel, begun before sunrise in Hawai'i, ends after dark as we pull into our driveway in Albuquerque, patches of snow reminding us that it's winter. Carl's parents, accompanied by their children and grandchildren, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with nine days in Hawai'i, three days among the volcanoes on the Big Island and six days at Kapalua Bay on the northwest coast of Maui. The party of fifteen, ranging in age from six to 72, provided compelling evidence for Newton's First Law—that's the one about inertia—but nonetheless enjoyed a wide range of activities, including turtle watching, swimming, surfing and body surfing, hiking, sightseeing, bird watching, snorkeling, horseback riding, a luau, and memorable whale watching.

1996 January 17: The final meeting of the naming committee for the new elementary school that Jeremy and Eleanor will attend in August. Carl serves on the committee, his primary objective being to name the school after J. Robert Oppenheimer, first director of Los Alamos and arguably the most important figure in New Mexico's history. Although Oppenheimer is among the finalists forwarded to the school board, the committee votes 10–1 in favor of Double Eagle, the name of the balloon that carried three Albuquerqueans across the Atlantic. A month later, the school board not surprisingly embraces Double Eagle. Carl learns a valuable lesson: promote a scientist not under the curse of the atomic bomb.

1996 February 4: Last fall Eleanor sold hand-made greeting cards for a quarter, eventually accumulating \$30. This, combined with \$15 set aside for tzedakah, she gave to Congregation Albert's Habitat for Humanity project to build a house in Albuquerque. This evening, at the temple's Tu B'Shevat seder, Rabbi Citrin summons Eleanor to the front and tells her story as the centerpiece of his appeal for the project. Eleanor is terribly embarrassed to be the focus of 200 people's attention, but is pleased to have done something special.

1996 June 1: Back from a week's vacation in the nation's capital, where we stayed with Karen's brother Jay in Vienna, Virginia. Karen's brother Wally drove from Syracuse, New York, to join us for Memorial weekend. The first four days are a trial for New Mexicans—nary a glimpse of the sun and incessant rain. During a short break in the rain, Wally, Jay, Jeremy, and Carl catch an Orioles–A's game at Baltimore's Camden Yards; most of the rest of the time we spend at the Washington area's many water-resistant attractions. The last two days turn clear and pleasantly cool, providing an opportunity to tour the National Zoo and the major monuments. At Arlington National Cemetery, we witness the solemn changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Eleanor, after quietly watching two-thirds of the ceremony, whispers to Karen, "When do they change the body?" A stop at the National Academy of Sciences nets the photo of Jeremy and Eleanor resting on Einstein's capacious lap. The highlight of the entire trip turns out to be the Washington Metro. Aside from being a major convenience, it has all the excitement of an amusement park ride for Jeremy and Eleanor. On our last evening Jeremy plans and we all execute a subway odyssey that hits all five Metro lines: Smithsonian to L'Enfant Plaza on the Blue Line; to Archives on Yellow; to Gallery Place on Green; to Metro Center on Red; and home to Vienna on Orange.

1996 July 12: Last day of the Albuquerque Academy's summer session. Jeremy has taken Games, Story Theater, Ceramics, and Science. Eleanor had the same list, except that she substituted her favorite course, Children as Authors, in place of Science. This year she wrote and illustrated a book called *The Magic Berry*, in which the heroine, after being transformed into a queen, has her nemesis hanged and then, instead of just living happily ever after, spends the rest of her life "giving orders."

1996 July 24: Karen and Jeremy depart for a two-day trip to Columbia, South Carolina. Colonial Life wanted Karen to visit the company's headquarters. Since she declined to endure the commercial flights, they send the company's eight-passenger private jet, an Israeli-made Westwind Commander. Accompanying Karen, Jeremy joins the pilot and co-pilot in the cockpit, flies the jet for an hour, and reprograms the plane's course to avoid

a thunderstorm over the Ouachitas. When Karen thanks the pilot for being so nice to Jeremy, he replies, "Oh, that's okay. Kept me awake."

1996 August 3: Carl is living in Santa Barbara for six weeks, participating in a program at UCSB's Institute for Theoretical Physics. The family joins him for a few days in the Southland. Abby Hellwarth graciously allows us to make our headquarters at her home in Santa Monica. Today we and Abby trek to San Diego for a day at Sea World. Long a fan of cetaceans, Eleanor is prompted to change her career choice from an author to a marine biologist who trains dolphins and whales, although she allows that she might sometimes write about her experiences. Yesterday evening, Jeremy and Carl ventured to Dodger Stadium to watch the Dodgers play the World Champion Atlanta Braves. Sitting in the front row of the top (fifth) deck, high above home plate, they see a splendid game. The Dodgers administer a rare defeat to John Smoltz, winning 2–1 on Billy Ashley's pinch-hit solo home run. Unlike Baltimore's Camden Yards, where a ticket is expensive and the food is good, Dodger Stadium still appeals to plebeian tastes. At \$7 the price is right, and the hamburgers and Dodger dogs are just the sort of wretched stuff that you want at a baseball game.

1996 September 9: Eleanor's homework assignment asks her to fill in the missing vowels in n_pkin, f_nish, b_sket, and p_cnic and to use the word problem in a sentence. She works very hard to compose the sentence, "When I was finished I put my napkin in the picnic basket." Karen points out that, excellent though her sentence is, the assignment calls for a sentence that uses problem. Karen suggests gently that she should cross out her sentence and write another one. Eleanor storms away, declaring loudly that she has done enough work. She returns with the sentence, "My mom is a problem."

1996 October 6: Karen has invited the Gerontology Group to a reunion in Albuquerque, the featured event to be a mass ascension at the Balloon Fiesta. Joining us for the weekend are Gene Dudley and Richard Lieboff, Abby Hellwarth, Rosemary Knollman, Penny Manly, Judy Meyer, Bob and Carol Nall, and a wild card, Karen's brother Jay. Though the crew is surprised to learn that they must get up at 5:30 am, they assemble this morning with only a little grumbling. We make our way to the Fiesta's new launching field and, as the sun rises over the Sandias, watch 900 hot-air balloons ascend into the cloudless southwestern sky.

1996 October 12: We again pick a perfect autumn day to hike up the precipitous west face of the Sandias. Our route along the La Luz Trail takes us from desert arroyos, marked by the yellow of cottonwoods, to mountain streams, fringed by the intense gold of quaking aspens. Karen, who has been working out daily for several months on her Nordic Rider, this year joins the rest of the family for the seven-mile, 3,400-foot ascent. In its second year, this hike threatens to become a family tradition, but as we descend quickly on the tram, Karen declares her preference that on future La Luz hikes, we ascend on the tram and walk down.

1996 November 20: No surprise here: Jeremy is myopic. Ordering his glasses last week at Wal-Mart, he tried on about twenty frames and then remarked, "Mom, I don't think I need glasses. I can see just as well without them." Originally promised for after Thanksgiving, the glasses are ready today. Jeremy tells Karen that he will wear them at home, but would prefer not to wear them to school till after Thanksgiving, because the kids aren't expecting to see him in glasses till then. After putting them on, he exclaims, "Wow! Look how clear those mountains are," and starts wearing them full-time immediately.

1996 December 1: Carl, who has been back in Santa Barbara since late October and will stay there till late December, joins the rest of the family in San Francisco for a holiday weekend with Karen's brother Ken, his fiancée Mary, and his son David. After a Thanksgiving dinner that departs from tradition only in the addition of artichokes, the weekend is loaded with activities, including a harrowing encounter with virtual reality at the Magic Edge, dim sum in Chinatown with Homs and Hondas, and a visit to the Monterey Aquarium. The long-anticipated high point for Jeremy comes today, as he, Karen, and Eleanor start their return to Albuquerque by flying on a United Boeing 777 from San Francisco to Denver.

1996 December 2: Karen resigns her position as Director of Benefits for Horizon/CMS Healthcare Corporation, citing . . . (call for details). She will work through January 3 and then test the proposition that time is more valuable than money.

1996 December 21: The sun, as if to apologize for its niggardly solstitial light and to promise its return, ignites the entire sky with an eye-popping sunset, the clouds varying from a delicate orange to pink to crimson, all set against the deep blue of a wintry dusk.

Best Wishes,

Eleanor

Jeremy

Karen

Carl

P.S. Come see us. We're still enchanted.

CMC/TEX