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2002 August 1

A New Mexico Diary

Monday, 2001 January 8: Karen returns to the work force, working part time as an attorney at the Sutin law firm in Albuquerque.

Saturday, 2001 March 31: Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl end the season with a day of spring skiing at Ski Santa Fe, the eleventh day for Jeremy and Carl this season. A discovery this year was Pajarito Ski Area, just outside Los Alamos. Known as Los Alamos's best kept secret, it is fairly small and relatively inexpensive, with breathtakingly steep runs and the best ski area cafeteria we've ever encountered.

Saturday, 2001 May 5: Ivan Deutsch, Carl's closest colleague at UNM, having been granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor, celebrates with a party. Hike up the west face of the Sandias along the La Luz Trail, letting the eight miles and 4,000 feet of gain build up an appetite, and at the top Ivan will reward you with dinner at the High Finance Restaurant. We join the hike, starting from the house at 11 am on a cool, windy day. Near the top the trail proceeds over the infamous rock slide, which is still in permanent shade and harbors substantial patches of slippery snow. At the top of the slide, in a sunny forest opening, everybody warms up and joins in a champagne toast, which fortifies the party for the last mile of easy walking to the restaurant. How to get down after dinner? Not surprisingly, the restaurant is also at the top of the Sandia Peak Tram, which provides an easy exit and a God's-eye view of the city glittering at the foot of the mountain.

Friday, 2001 May 25: Jeremy, graduating from Desert Ridge Middle School, is one of two students to receive the Academic Achievement Award for a 4.0 GPA all the way through middle school.

Friday, 2001 June 8: Jeremy and Karen have dinner with Janet Reno at Rabbi Black's house. Carl and Eleanor miss out, he being in New Jersey of all places and she at Hummingbird Music Camp in the Jemez Mountains. Invited to tomorrow's bat mitzvah, Ms. Reno unexpectedly decides to come—she is at loose ends, after all—so Jeremy and Karen find themselves at an intimate dinner with a former Attorney General. She is quiet and unassuming and even hard to hear. Jeremy thinks she is far too nice to have been Attorney General. Her passion is white-water kayaking. She describes kayaking on the Potomac above Washington, where her FBI guard couldn't keep up with her. She gives a short speech at the special evening service to install the synagogue's new officers. Leaving office after two years as president of Congregation Albert, Karen receives a spontaneous standing ovation, despite the general prohibition of applause at services.

Friday, 2001 June 29: Eleanor returns from a week at the Catalina Island Marine Institute and is met at the dock in San Pedro by Karen. For the second year in a row, Eleanor took full advantage of the water activities at CIMI's sea camp, where the front yard is the Pacific Ocean. Jeremy and Carl arrive in LA in the evening. Tomorrow we'll take the boat to Catalina, figuring that we all ought to enjoy a few days of the kayaking and snorkeling that have made Eleanor's camp experience such a success.

Friday, 2001 July 20: We canoe down the Wisconsin River on a lovely day, paddling when the mood strikes and letting the river do the work when it doesn't. This is the last day of a week-long visit with Carl's brother Doug's family, all of us staying at Doug and Sherry's house on the Wisconsin River just west of Spring Green. When we weren't eating or sleeping or touring Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin or taking in a performance of *As You Like It*, we were generally on or in the river, canoeing, fishing, or swimming from the sand bars in front of Doug and Sherry's house. You have to move quickly over the 40 yards from the house to the river—otherwise you'll be sucked dry by the mosquitoes, which are having an exceptionally good year—but once on the river, with even a little breeze stirring, you leave the mosquitoes behind. Eleanor's cousin Kevin caught her a pancake-shell

turtle to replace Sherlock Holmes, the late red-bellied slider, also captured by Kevin from the Wisconsin River, but today she reluctantly returns the pancake-shell to the river, having decided it ought to stay in its native mud.

Saturday, 2001 July 28: We're in Lubbock to help celebrate the wedding of Carl's niece Sonia to Guy Capuzzo, the first wedding of the next generation in Carl's family. The ceremony, performed in the back yard of the house where Carl's sister Linda and her husband Tom have lived for nearly 25 years, goes off without a hitch—and ends not a moment too soon, because the wedding site is soon to be unavailable. Linda and Tom are moving out Monday morning, heading to their new home site in northwestern Arkansas. Before the wedding, we stop at a pet store and discover that it will sell Eleanor the baby turtles she can't buy in New Mexico. She buys four, three for herself and one for her friends, the three Hollinger girls.

Friday, 2001 August 3: Jeremy, Carl, Aaron Oster-Beal, and Larry Beal are camped at just over 11,000 feet in the Weminuche Wilderness of the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado. They took the Durango-Silverton narrow-gauge train yesterday, disembarking at Needleton and hiking into the Chicago Basin. The southwest monsoons are active, producing more rain than they need, but the large tree above their camp site has such dense foliage that they can prepare meals without getting wet in even the heaviest rain. Today they set out to climb Mt. Windom (14,082 feet), but get started too late and are driven back by thunderstorms that develop well before noon.

Tuesday, 2001 September 11: Karen's brother Wally, flying across Ohio in his radioless 1940 Luscombe, acquires a military escort of two F-16s. Having just heard on his Walkman of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, he concludes it would be wise to cut short his trip to Illinois by landing at the nearest Ohio air field.

Thursday, 2001 September 27: Karen has a blast in South Dakota! She really did enjoy her visit to Rapid City to help supervise the installation of a new pension plan for employees of the Dakota State Cement Company, just acquired by her client, Grupos Cimentos de Chihuahua. Yesterday she watched the evening light fade behind the massive busts of Mount Rushmore. Today she witnesses the weekly blast that reduces a portion of the company's mountain to rubble.

Sunday, 2001 October 28: Jeremy organizes and leads a hike up the La Luz trail to the top of the tram. His friends Tyler Gross and Troy Schuler, together with Tyler's mother Kathy, accompany him. Though they all make it to the top, Troy tires and declares this to be his first and last La Luz hike, and Kathy says she won't do it again—at least for a year.

Thursday, 2001 November 28: Carl has been spending the fall semester in Santa Barbara, helping to direct a program on quantum information at UCSB's Institute for Theoretical Physics. Today we all enjoy Thanksgiving dinner at the beach house he is renting, joined by a number of the participants in the ITP program and by Karen's brother Ken, wife Mary, and son David, who quizzes the Ph.D. physicists about college choices.

Tuesday, 2001 December 25: We're all in Santa Barbara, taking advantage of the last week of Carl's beach-house rental. Joined by Ivan Deutsch, who has shared the house with Carl, we decide to take the short hike to an area called The Playgrounds in the hills above Santa Barbara. The trick is to find the trailhead. As one drives west along a road in the hills, the trail is said to begin just beyond the first telephone pole that is right next to the south side of the road; after investigating every such telephone pole—and making several false starts—we find the trailhead at the seventh. Our persistence is rewarded. The trail is a hobbit-sized tunnel through a dense jungle of chaparral—coast live oak, cliff rose, and red-barked manzanita bursting with tiny bell-shaped white flowers tinged with pink. It emerges into a maze of enormous boulders—a playground indeed—from the top of which the views are spectacular: Santa Barbara and Goleta in the foreground, the Pacific sparkling in the midday sun, the four Channel Islands laid out just like on a map, and Catalina Island dimly visible nearly a hundred miles away.

Yesterday we did the cliff walk that Ivan and Carl have enjoyed all fall. The walk proceeds for about a mile east of the beach house along the edge of the high cliffs above the beach, then descends steeply and returns along the beach. Though the water is too cold for comfortable swimming, we played in the sand, watched the antics of the shore birds, scanned for sea lions sunning on the offshore rocks, and competed for most skips in skipping rocks off the surf.

Friday, 2001 December 28: We board a boat at Ventura Harbor, bound for Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the four Channel Islands. Approaching storms have generated very big surf, 25 feet high as we leave the harbor. The boat bobs up and down the big waves, but none of us gets seasick. Once used as a sheep ranch, Santa Cruz Island is now divided between the National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy. Steep cliffs rise directly out of the ocean, interrupted by pocket beaches. Behind the cliffs, rounded hills are covered with green grass and dotted with occasional trees. On a cloudy, windy winter day, this California island reminds one of Scotland on a typical summer day. We see the island scrub jay, bigger and bluer than its mainland counterpart and found only on the Channel Islands. On the boat ride back to Ventura, we encounter several pods of common dolphins and spot a sea otter floating on the waves. The otter is a big surprise, the crew maintaining that this is the only sighting this far south in three years.

Saturday, 2002 February 16: Jeremy's high-school passion is speech and debate. Today he participates in Highland High School's speech tournament, the most important tournament he's been in so far. He wins junior Lincoln-Douglas debate and takes first place in varsity extemp.

Saturday, 2002 February 23: In front of family and friends at Congregation Albert, Eleanor becomes a bat mitzvah one day shy of her 13th birthday. She leads the service, reads confidently from the Torah, and gives a speech on the relation between the uniqueness of the individual—Esther is the example, this being the Shabbat closest to Purim—and the way individuals fit into communities. Her tallit is a work of art. Commissioned by Geoffrey and Julia Kalmus, it binds Eleanor to the Jewish community, yet celebrates her own interest in marine life through its depiction of humpback whales. The kiddush luncheon of potato soup and green-chile stew draws inspiration from Eleanor's preference for soup. The evening party at the Albuquerque Country Club is a costume party—it's Purim. Karen's insistence that everyone show up in a costume ensures that everyone does, and this being the essential ingredient of a costume party, everyone has a great time. Karen is Snoopy (duh!), Eleanor an ocean wave, Jeremy a Starfleet officer (you could staff a starship at the party), and Carl is Sherlock Holmes.

Sonia and Guy bring Eleanor four baby turtles from the Lubbock pet store. Eleanor keeps three, bringing her total to four, two of hers having died since last summer, and gives the fourth to the Hollingers.

Monday, 2002 March 25: Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl finish off the skiing season with the best day of the season. Accompanied by much of Doug's family (Doug, Sherry, Kevin, AJ, and Josie), they spend a delightful day skiing on over a foot of fresh powder at the magnificently scenic Alta Ski Resort outside Salt Lake City. Yesterday and Saturday they all skied at Park City, on the other side of the Wasatch Mountains, where Jeremy particularly liked McConkey's Bowl. But today it's the best, Alta, and the only down side is that Doug loses a ski in the deep powder filling a big bowl called the Ballroom. Last night Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl treated everyone to a viewing of *The Dish*, the wonderfully funny, yet poignant movie about how the Aussies saved the television transmission of Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon.

Monday, 2002 April 29: A cloudy day ends with a spectacular show. The Sun emerges from behind clouds as it approaches the horizon. The isolated trees, adorned with the newly emerging leaves of spring, glow against the gold of the still brown grasses. As the Sun sinks below the horizon, the whole sky begins to smolder. Peach, pink, red, and purple march across the sky, leaving behind the deep blue of dusk.

Friday, 2002 May 10: After an informative talk about the volcanoes of Venus at the planetarium of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, we return home to find that three of Eleanor's turtles have ganged up on Titan, the smallest, and eaten him. Nothing remains but his legs and head and scattered remnants of his shell. The turtles don't seem quite so cute any more.

Wednesday, 2002 May 15: Doug's lost ski turns up in his mail. An Alta maintenance worker, after breaking his own ski, stepped into Doug's ski, as though it were waiting for him, and skied to the bottom of the mountain.

Sunday, 2002 May 20: Jeremy and Carl leave the house at 7 am to mount an assault on Cabezon Peak, a volcanic neck 50 miles northwest of Albuquerque. Visible from our neighborhood, it rises about 1,500 feet above the surrounding terrain. Jeremy drives the last fifty miles, first on the spiffy new 70-mile-per-hour four-lane highway that leads to the Four Corners—his first highway driving—and then on county and BLM roads of decreasing quality, which culminate in a rutted single-lane track to the trailhead. The worthy intention of starting early to avoid the heat is foiled by an early morning thunderstorm that chases them back to the car till the lightning

is out of the way. The first part of the trail, up to a terrace at the foot of the neck, is steep, but conventional. Above the terrace the neck juts out of the ground like a gigantic pipe; the last 600 feet of gain go right up the apparently vertical face. Unnerved by this ascent, they emerge onto the 7,750-foot top, which is roughly a circle with a diameter of about 100 yards. The view is outstanding, mountains, mesas, and canyons in all directions, the intensely blue skies dotted with puffy white clouds. The hour-long descent, even more disconcerting than the climb, leaves them back on the terrace, relieved but shaken. Reporting to Karen back at the house, they are surprised to learn that she considers the biggest danger to have been Jeremy's driving at 70 miles per hour.

Monday, 2002 June 3: What an anniversary. Carl goes to bed in Brisbane before Karen gets up in Albuquerque.

One of the effects of paying so little attention to Australia is that it is always such a pleasant surprise to find it there. Every cultural instinct and previous experience tells you that when you travel this far you should find, at the very least, people on camels. There should be unrecognizable lettering on the signs, and swarthy men in robes drinking coffee from thimble-sized cups and puffing on hookahs, and rattletrap buses and potholes in the road and a real possibility of disease on everything you touch—but no, it's not like that at all. This is comfortable and clean and familiar. Apart from a tendency among men of a certain age to wear knee-high socks with shorts, these people are just like you and me. This is wonderful. This is exhilarating. This is why I love to come to Australia.

Australia is mostly empty and a long way away. Its population is small and its role in the world consequently peripheral. It doesn't have coups, recklessly overfish, arm disagreeable despots, grow coca in provocative quantities, or throw its weight around in a brash and unseemly manner. It is stable and peaceful and good. It doesn't need watching, and so we don't. But I will tell you this: the loss is entirely ours.

— Bill Bryson, *In a Sunburned Country*

Friday, 2002 June 7: We're all in Oz. Waltzing Matilda and "no worries" and "G'day" for a month. Fair dinkum, mate. What could be better?

Tuesday, 2002 June 10: Standing atop Sydney's Harbour Bridge after a one-hour climb—ants on holiday, as they say down below—Karen, Jeremy, and Eleanor command an unsurpassed view of one of the world's great cities, the business district rising out of the south end of the bridge, the magnificent harbor stretching east to the Pacific, and the famous Opera House perched on Bennelong Point just below. They're off to Brisbane tomorrow evening. Carl joined them for four days of sightseeing in the Sydney area before returning to Brisbane this morning.

Saturday, 2002 June 15: Karen stumbles over a tiger snake, the fourth most venomous snake in the world (the top seven are Australian), and steps nimbly aside as she issues a shrill warning to the rest of us. Eleanor screams, and we all freeze. The snake slithers off the track, disappearing into a hollow at the base of a nearby tree. We're walking through the semitropical rain forest in Lamington National Park, located in the McPherson Range about 50 miles southwest of Brisbane. Not every moment in this ruggedly beautiful terrain is quite so exciting, yet the sense of danger never wholly disappears, what with the world's deadliest spider lurking in holes in the roots of fallen forest giants, concealed behind a veil of its own silk, and the giant stinging tree, an opportunistic colonizer of newly created holes reaching to the forest canopy, ready to produce hours to weeks or months of agonizing pain in anyone foolish enough to brush exposed skin against its large heart-shaped leaves. We're spending the weekend at O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse, a pioneer in ecotourism and still a prime eco-destination. When not experiencing the beauty and menace of the rain forest, we can wander out of our room to feed the red and green king parrots and the red and blue crimson rosellas—"I'm the gaudiest," each seems to boast—and they serve to introduce us to the extraordinarily varied bird life of the forest, which ranges from the ubiquitous brush turkey to the rare and beautiful Albert's lyrebird—we see two—to tiny scrub wrens rummaging through the litter on the forest floor.

Saturday, 2002 June 22: We can't resist volcanic necks. With Carl's colleague and friend, Rüdiger Schack, who traveled to Brisbane from London, Jeremy and Carl stand on top of Mt. Beerwah, the tallest of several necks in the Glasshouse Mountains about 30 miles north of Brisbane. The climb was more demanding than anticipated—Karen and Eleanor prudently chose to remain at the base of the neck—but the reward is another big view, the other necks rising out of the surrounding plain of eucalypt forest and macadamia orchards, the buildings of Brisbane's central business district far to the south, and the McPherson Range, 80 miles away, dimly

visible on the horizon. It's uncanny how the terrain around Brisbane is shaped by the same forces that shape our own environment in northern New Mexico: a hot spot produced an enormous, now-eroded volcano, fringed by lesser volcanic activity, preserved as volcanic necks. A big difference is age: the hot spot passed under Brisbane 25 million years ago, whereas our hot spot was just west of Los Alamos 2 million years ago and is now beneath Raton (watch out, Oklahoma!). There's another big difference: nobody spies the Pacific from Cabezon, but from the top of Mt. Beerwah, it fills the eastern horizon.

The Pacific beckons. We spend the afternoon exploring tide pools at the nearby beach resort of Caloundra. An osprey pulls a fish from the ocean as we watch. At dusk thousands of rainbow lorikeets—only a four-year-old with a new set of crayons could come up with a bird like the rainbow lorikeet, which has a red bill, blue head, breast of orange and purple, wings of green, red, yellow, and gray, and a green tail—assemble on the Norfolk Island pines lining the beach, making a racket to wake the dead. On Monday we'll be off to Cairns for the complete ocean experience.

Wednesday, 2002 June 26: It's 7:30 am on a sunny winter morning in the tropics. We've just climbed 1,200 feet to Cook's Look, the highest point on Lizard Island, retracing the footsteps of the immortal Captain James Cook (that's Cook, not Kirk). He used the unrestricted 360° view to spy a passage through the boundary of the Great Barrier Reef, allowing him to escape the trap he had sailed into when he entered the reef 800 miles down the Australian coast. We ran into the famous Captain a few years ago on his nominal home turf at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, but his legacy is in the Pacific, where you simply can't get away from him. Over the years we've encountered him at Sydney, all along the Queensland coast (he named the Glasshouse Mountains), at Mercury Bay in New Zealand, and at his death site on the Kona Coast of Hawai'i.

We arrived at Lizard Island yesterday evening after a two-day cruise from Cairns aboard the *Reef Endeavor*. We spend much of the day snorkeling the fringing reef in Watson's Bay, seeing giant clams, bright blue starfish, blue-spotted rays, blue and yellow and red Christmas tree worms, a reef shark, myriads of brightly colored fish, and a very territorial pink and gray damselfish that nips at Eleanor until she realizes you have to tell it to go away before it tells you.

Thursday, 2002 June 27: The wind is high. The sea is choppy. We get soaked to the skin as our twelve-person boat, the *Lizzie*, bounces the short distance from the *Reef Endeavor* to the snorkeling site, a small patch of Ribbon Reef No. 5, on the outer fringe of the Great Barrier Reef. Big Pacific surf pounds on the outer boundary of the reef just a few hundred yards away. This is what we came 10,000 miles to experience, but we're all wondering whether it's worth it, till we plunge in and find, like Alice going through the looking glass, another world on the other side. The sandy bottom is plainly visible about five fathoms below. Our mesa of coral—called a bommie—rises to within a few feet of the surface. The coral, tinged pink and purple and yellow and orange and blue, waves languidly. The fish, some swimming lazily, others darting in and out of the coral, come in every size and every combination of colors—more of that four-year-old's imagination. Once again we're on top, and the view, through the windows of our snorkeling masks, is truly amazing.

Tuesday, 2002 July 2: Our cruise ended early last Friday morning. We spent the day shopping leisurely in Cairns and viewing the shore birds that inhabit the vast mud flat that separates Cairns from Trinity Bay. A real treat is the huge Australian pelican, dressed smartly in black and white and about the size of an American white pelican. Its take-off is spectacularly ungainly. After getting permission from air-traffic control, it lumbers and lurches into the air like the 747 of the bird world. On Saturday we returned to the vigorous vacationing we favor, with a white-water rafting trip down the Tully River. We spotted several of the famous iridescent blue Ulysses butterflies in quiet stretches between the class-4 rapids. On Sunday we took the scenic and historic railway from Cairns to nearby Kuranda, returning via gondolas that soar above the rain forest before plunging to a base station north of Cairns. On Monday we boated to Green Island, a small coral cay 15 miles off the coast. Though cold and wind cut our snorkeling short, the trip was salvaged by sighting big batfish, giant trevallies, and two green turtles from the glass-bottom boat. Today Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl are up at 6:00 am to embark at 7:45 for a two-and-a-half hour boat trip to the outer reef at Michaelmas Cay. The sea is very rough, waves smashing into the bow and spraying sheets of water onto the upper deck—the prospect prompted Karen to opt out—but at the outer reef the sun shines feebly, the waves are tamed by the reef itself, and the snorkeling is excellent. We see

Wally, the large bumphead wrasse, whose eyes follow you as you snorkel by and whose alluring lips dwarf even Mick Jagger's.

We're left waterlogged by our ocean experiences. We might never dry out in Cairns, but New Mexico will do the trick. We begin our return tomorrow.

Thursday, 2002 July 4: A long Independence Day, 41 hours in all, begins in Sydney and ends in LA with the Hollywood Bowl's fireworks show. Along the way we flew for 13 hours from Melbourne to LA, arriving just after sunrise, and heard the LA Philharmonic's holiday pops concert featuring James Taylor. (Carl missed the concert, having gotten so sick on the Melbourne-LA flight that he had to spend the LA half of the day trying to recover.)

It's good to be back in America, enjoying yet again the hospitality of our good friend Abby Hellwarth in Santa Monica, but we sincerely regret leaving Australia. If you haven't been to Oz, the loss is, as Bill Bryson says, entirely yours. Our experience is that there really are "no worries" when you're traveling in Australia.

Thursday, July 11: Eleanor goes for her first dive after four days at the Catalina Island Marine Institute. This, her third year at CIMI's sea camp, is the first year that she is spending three weeks. Her letters home confess a little homesickness, but are mainly full of the fun and excitement of snorkeling, scuba diving (she'll be certified by the end of camp), sailing, dolphin sightings, underwater digital-camera photography, discovering that one of her cabin mates has also dined at the patisserie in the Rocks section of Sydney—"we both had a fruit tart and mouse picasso"—and essential activities such as "I got my shirts dirty and successfully washed them."

Thursday, July 18: Under a bright midday sun, Jeremy, Carl, Aaron Oster-Beal, and Larry Beal stand at 12,634 feet, skipping stones off the glassy surface of Silver King Lake in the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness of the central Colorado Rockies. Brawny cumulus clouds raft across a deep blue sky, their deep shadows playing among the peaks and meadows and lakes of the Missouri Basin. The party packed into the basin on Monday, struggling over 13,220-foot Elkhead Pass just as a thunderstorm started spitting popcorn snow. They made camp on the tundra next to a small unnamed lake at 12,717 feet. On Tuesday they climbed Emerald Peak (13,904 feet), Iowa Peak (13,831 feet), and Missouri Mountain (14,067 feet), and on Wednesday they ascended Mount Belford (14,197 feet), the 19th highest peak in Colorado. All four peaks induced that dizzying top-of-the-world feeling that comes from standing atop a tiny summit looking out over mountains stretching in all directions. Today the group is leisurely exploring the Missouri Basin, an irregular plain perched incongruously on the shoulders of the surrounding peaks. Returning to camp late in the afternoon, they discover that the tiny stream that's supplied their water has dried up, a victim of Colorado's severe drought. Fortunately, the lake, though less inviting than the stream, provides another source, and they hike out tomorrow.

Monday, 2002 July 29: Starting from Uncle Kenny's house in San Carlos, Jeremy walks to the CalTrain station, takes the train into San Francisco, and tours the city on his own, seeing the Cable Car Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Exploratorium, and Fisherman's Wharf and taking every form of public transportation he can find. He begins a two-week debate camp at Stanford tomorrow.

Best Wishes,

Eleanor

Jeremy

Karen

Carl

CMC/TEX

P.S. More for your money this year: nineteen months for the price of a year. The photo shows us all in our costumes for Eleanor's bat mitzvah party.