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2003 October 1

A New Mexico Diary

Saturday, 2002 August 31: We're spending the Labor Day weekend at southern Colorado's Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. We have a big group, seventeen in all, including us, the Greys, and the Hollingers from Albuquerque and the Oster-Beals from Denver. Our chief objective is to test the Australian method of sand tobogganing on the Great Sand Dunes, which are among the biggest dunes in the world. We experienced the Aussie technique on Moreton Island, a sand island just off the coast at Brisbane: you lie chest down on a thin masonite board, lightly waxed on the bottom with a candle, and slide down, holding the front of the board up out of the sand to avoid a catastrophic blast of sand in the face. Steering is not an option. The technique works beautifully, just as it did in Oz. We have some great descents down steep dunes, and Eleanor and Aaron Oster-Beal experience memorable wipe-outs on a dune that is far too big for this activity. We feel especially smug as we glide swiftly past the unenlightened, who try to slide on sleds, plastic sheets, and pieces of cardboard, none of which works even a little.

Saturday, 2002 September 21: Jeremy and Carl enjoy lunch atop Santa Fe Baldy, at 12,622 feet the highest peak outside Santa Fe. It's a perfect beginning for autumn. Blue sky dappled by white clouds matches rocky ground dappled by dazzlingly white snow patches left from a storm last Wednesday. The Pecos Valley lies at their feet on the east, the much bigger Rio Grande Valley, with the Jemez Mountains rising behind, on the west. They can see a dizzying distance along the spine of the Rockies, from Blanca Peak rising above the Great Sand Dunes, 120 miles away in southern Colorado, to the Capitan Mountains, just visible 200 miles away in southern New Mexico.

Sunday, 2002 October 6: Karen screams, "A snake!" and points to a rattler coiled tightly in a bed of juniper needles just off the foothills trail behind our house. Jeremy, Karen, Carl, and Carl's dad get a good look before proceeding along the trail. Treading carefully on their return thirty minutes later, they find the snake still lying utterly motionless, in the same spot and in the same position, soaking up the bright late afternoon sunshine of an early autumn day.

Monday, 2002 November 4: Karen changes jobs, starting work at Modrall Sperling, New Mexico's biggest law firm.

Saturday, 2002 November 16: Jeremy helps to organize the Cave Classic, La Cueva High School's annual speech and debate tournament. He's in charge of recruiting judges and assigning them to events. His hard work and organizational skills, along with those of his fellow students, make this the best-run speech and debate tournament in recent New Mexico history. Contrary to all previous experience, the tournament, which began yesterday, ends right on schedule.

Friday, 2002 November 22: Jeremy participates in a statewide model United Nations meeting at the capitol in Santa Fe. Teams of four or more high-school students represent countries in a mock UN General Assembly. La Cueva's seven-member delegation represents Cuba in the three-day meeting, which ends today. Jeremy and Walter Lamberson are the chief speakers for the delegation. Their effective presentations help La Cueva win the Best Delegation Award.

Sunday, 2002 December 15: The Albuquerque Junior Symphony, in which Eleanor plays French horn, presents a concert of the music it has perfected during rehearsals each Saturday morning this fall. This is their first concert, and there's something magical, for the middle-school musicians and for their audience of parents, siblings, and relatives, in finding that what comes out when they bow and blow and beat really sounds like an orchestra.

Saturday, 2003 January 11: Jeremy and debate partner Walter Lamberson participate in a new event, called *Controversy*, at the UNM Invitational Speed and Debate Tournament. *Controversy*, being introduced into high-school debate under the sponsorship of Ted Turner, features several lively exchanges, called crossfires, between opposing team members and culminates in a grand crossfire involving all four participants. Though Jeremy and Walter fail to place, they decide to focus on *Controversy*, because it's more fun, with better topics, than the other debate formats and because its novelty will mean less competition to plow through on the way to the national debate tournament.

Monday, 2003 January 20: A thousand diamonds spring to life and dance across each snow-custed field as Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl cross the border into New Mexico, returning from a weekend of bright sunshine in southern Colorado. Larry Beal, a cross-country skier perfecting his telemark turns, and son Aaron, a snowboarder, joined them for two days of sliding down the slopes at Wolf Creek, a resort perched on the continental divide in the San Juan Mountains. Jeremy, Eleanor, and Aaron especially enjoyed the forest skiing for which Wolf Creek is renowned. As they flitted in and out of the trees, Eleanor made the transition to skiing anything that her brother does.

Sunday, 2003 March 2: Steve Rogers, Jeremy, and Carl enjoy the best skiing of the season—and some of the best ever—at Ski Santa Fe. El Niño finally delivered in February, dumping snow all over the New Mexico mountains. They glide on feathery powder on runs that are rarely open, because wind and sun remove the snow too quickly.

Sunday, 2003 March 9: Jeremy, Walter, and the La Cueva team return from a four-day model UN meeting in New York City. The La Cueva delegation represented the Philippines on mock UN committees—Jeremy participated in the UN Development Programme—and in meetings held in the General Assembly chamber at the United Nations building. Encouraged by a meeting with a member of the Philippines delegation to the UN, the La Cueva team did such an effective job that it was ranked in the top 24 of the 200 or so teams at the meeting. Outside of his official responsibilities, Jeremy found time to ride the subway (for him an end as well as a means), enjoy a couple of dinners in Little Italy, tour the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and see the former site of the World Trade Center.

Monday, 2003 March 24: Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl ski at Brighton, in Big Cottonwood Canyon just east of Salt Lake City. Carl's brother Doug sits out today, not feeling well, but his family is well represented by son Kevin from LA, son Jeff and his fiance Diane from Atlanta, and daughter Josie and her boyfriend Michael from the home base in Madison. Saturday was Solitude slush, Sunday was Snowbird white-outs and ice covered by a thin veneer of powder, but today, in the typical skiing way, redeems the whole trip. High-speed lifts and fresh powder combine to make for a magical day. The group makes run after run after run, scarcely pausing to catch breath, until this perfect day runs out.

Saturday, 2003 April 5: Jeremy and Walter win the National Forensic League District Debate Tournament in *Controversy*, a win that will send them to the National Speech and Debate Tournament in Atlanta in June. In the double-elimination tournament, they first lose to a team from the archrival Albuquerque Academy, but in a gritty comeback, defeat the same team twice in succession late in the evening to win the tournament.

Sunday, 2003 April 6: Our lives are diminished by the death of our good friend Geoffrey Kalmus last Thursday of pancreatic cancer. Geoffrey and Julia retired to Albuquerque from New York at about the same time we moved here from Southern California. They have been among our very closest friends in Albuquerque, and we are truly indebted to them for their many kindnesses. Karen delivers one of the six eulogies at the funeral service today at Congregation Albert, emphasizing Geoffrey's love for his family and his untiring and effective commitment to numerous community organizations, including Congregation Albert and the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra.

Tuesday, 2003 April 8: Jeremy spent the last three days at the state capitol in Santa Fe, participating in a program called Youth and Government. High-school students from around the state meet in a mock legislature to consider and pass legislation, and the mock governor, Walter Lamberson this year, signs or vetoes what they pass. Jeremy was recognized as Best Representative in the House and was elected to be Speaker of the House when the group reconvenes next year. When Walter and Jeremy realized last week that they needed a speaker to address the group, they walked a block or so from Walter's house to the home of Dave Cargo, former Republican governor of New Mexico, and invited him to speak. Jeremy reports that Cargo gave a humdinger of a speech, on the class structure we are creating in America, growing anti-Semitism in Europe, the current Administration's trashing of the West, and the need for public financing of elections, all of which makes abundantly clear why Cargo is no longer a force among New Mexico Republicans.

Saturday, 2003 April 12: At UNM's Popejoy Hall, Eleanor and the Albuquerque Junior Symphony play the first movement of Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and music from the movie *Gladiator* in AJS's final concert of the year.

Monday, 2003 April 28: As we sit down in the Modrall seats behind the third-base dugout at the new Isotopes Park, to watch the Albuquerque Isotopes play the Iowa Cubs, Jeremy exclaims, "Hey! Isn't that Bill Richardson?" Sure enough, the Governor and former UN Ambassador takes his seat among a big party right next to us. This, after all, is New Mexico, small enough that the hoi polloi expect to rub against the great pretty regularly. Carl remarks to Karen that the Governor is not going to last very long on the diet of deep-fried food and ribs that he consumes as the game gets underway. Carl manages a brief conversation during which the Governor indiscreetly reveals who the new University president will be—a choice not to be announced for two weeks—and assures Carl that he will do better at increasing faculty salaries next year.

Tuesday, 2003 April 29: Eleanor is one of 28 members of Desert Ridge Middle School's team in the Knowledge Masters Open. Competing against over 900 teams from around the country and the world, Desert Ridge comes in seventh. Eleanor makes a crucial contribution when the team needs to know what the swagman was waiting for in the Australian tune *Waltzing Matilda*. Drawing on her personal knowledge of Oz, Eleanor answers immediately, "Till his billy boiled."

Saturday, 2003 May 10: One of sixteen French hornists trying out for a place next year in one of the high-school youth orchestras, Eleanor secures a spot in the Albuquerque Youth Orchestra.

Friday, 2003 May 23: Eleanor graduates from Desert Ridge Middle School as one of five students with a perfect 4.0 grade-point average. She will join Jeremy at La Cueva High School next year.

Saturday, 2003 June 7: Jeremy and ten other members of the Confirmation Class of 5763 lead the Saturday morning service at Congregation Albert. Each student brings a personal characteristic as a gift to the service, and each student gives a brief speech. Jeremy's gift is "debate," and unlike his fellow students, whose speeches deal with family, friends,

and synagogue, Jeremy presents a critical analysis of the difficult choices that must be made to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Saturday, 2003 June 21: Jeremy and Walter return from a week at the national high-school debate tournament in Atlanta. They stayed with Jeremy's conveniently placed cousin Jeff and his fiancée, Diane Berry, in their newly acquired house, and they competed in *Controversy*, the debate topic being whether the US should assume primary responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq. As the week advanced, Jeremy's phone calls home got more and more excited as it became clear to him and Walter that there was no team there they couldn't defeat. The competition began with 99 teams from all over the country. Along with 31 other teams, Jeremy and Walter charged out of the qualifying rounds into the double-elimination tournament to decide the national champion. After four rounds, they were still standing with eleven other teams. In the next round, they defeated the only previously undefeated team and advanced along with seven other teams to what now amounted to the quarterfinals of a single-elimination tournament. Then their luck ran out. They ended up fifth in the country, but were convinced that they could beat any team there and thought that any of the teams in the quarterfinals could have ended up first. They acquired two enormous trophies (had they come in first, we might have had to get a new house just to store the trophy), one of which becomes the centerpiece on our dining-room table.

Tuesday, 2003 June 24: Jeremy, along with Aaron Oster-Beal, tops off the skiing season with a day of summer skiing at Arapahoe Basin west of Denver, Jeremy's eighteenth day of the season. With snow confined to the upper half of the mountain and, even there, just to the runs, he discovers that summer skiing is more of a novelty than something to favor over more traditional summer activities. He's spending a day with the Oster-Beals before proceeding tomorrow to Lander, Wyoming, where he will join a backpacking trip organized by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). On Friday his group will disappear into the wilderness of the Absaroka Range, east of Yellowstone, for 28 days.

Saturday, July 5: Eleanor, on her way to three weeks of camp at the Catalina Island Marine Institute (CIMI), is hopping between the homes of fellow CIMIans. She spent two days in Phoenix with Kate Naranjo, learning from direct experience that there are places even hotter than Albuquerque in the summer. She and Kate are now at the home of Jacqueline Orgel, who lives *right on the beach* in Oxnard. The three spend today on the sand, with Jacqueline teaching Eleanor and Kate to surf. Calling home in the evening, Eleanor berates her mom and dad for moving so far away from the Pacific and concludes with the plaintive remark, "Jacqueline's on her school's surfing team," it being unnecessary to add that La Cueva High School doesn't offer surfing. To her dad's suggestion that Kate and Jacqueline might enjoy skiing in New Mexico, Eleanor replies, "That's pathetic, Dad."

Monday, 2003 July 21: Bobbing like a cork in their two-person kayak, Karen and Carl watch a young California sea lion swim circles around them about 50 yards off the Catalina Island coast. What looks like play is really more serious business: twice on surfacing, the sea lion has a fish in its mouth. Karen and Carl are on Catalina because yesterday was Parents' Day at CIMI. Eleanor showed them proudly around the camp at Toyon Bay, describing her activities and her classes in scuba diving, kayaking, ichthyology/invertebrates, underwater photography, and the Green Team, which helps to restore native plants on the island. Eleanor is enjoying marine camp even more than in the past, and it's not hard for Karen and Carl to see why.

Monday, 2003 July 21: A golf cart screeches to a halt next to Karen and Carl as they stroll along the beach at Avalon, the tiny settlement on Catalina Island, where golf carts are the primary mode of transportation. The woman driving the cart, after a few stuttering false starts, finally blurts out, "I saw your hair and drove all the way around the block to ask how you get that salt-and-pepper look." Karen replies politely that it's her natural hair color, and the woman departs, expressing extreme regret that there's no magic formula to duplicate Karen's look on her own hair.

Tuesday, 2003 July 22: A first! We all spend the night in different places: Carl at home in Albuquerque, Karen in Los Angeles, Eleanor on Catalina Island, and Jeremy somewhere deep in the Absarokas.

Friday, 2003 July 25: Eleanor returns from camp, arriving in Albuquerque late in the evening. She is bubbling over with stories about her camp experiences and vows to return to CIMI every summer as a student, each year becoming a more accomplished scuba diver, and perhaps someday to become a camp counselor or instructor.

Saturday, 2003 July 26: Jeremy emerges from the wilderness, a month of not shaving having left him with sideburns and a little stubble on his chin. His party consisted of three NOLS instructors and fourteen students, nine women and six men, ranging in age from 16 to 25. He is full of stories about such exotica as backpacking without freeze-dried food, preparing bluebell salads, surviving on no underwear and one pair of nylon shorts, and substituting rocks for toilet paper. Given the chance, he would gladly head out tomorrow for another 28 days in the wilderness.

The Snoopy message board that hangs in our dining room, which Eleanor heretofore has used to record the number of days till the end of the school year, now reads, "342 more days until CIMI."

Sunday, 2003 August 3: Carl's nephew Kevin is married to Meredid Soto in an outdoor ceremony on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, the Bay Bridge gleaming in the background. Two days of brutally hot, humid weather—Eleanor joins Carl in swearing off the eastern United States—give way to a lovely evening, a light breeze off the bay keeping everyone

cool as the couple exchange vows. Jeremy, resplendent in a tux, serves as a groomsman, expertly escorting his Aunt Sherry, mother of the groom, to and from her front-row seat. Eleanor, bidding for the role of statuesque beauty, reads in Hebrew the famous passage from Ruth: "For wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

Saturday, 2003 August 23: Jeremy, Carl, and Walter leave Jack's Creek trailhead at 8:00 am, intending to climb East Pecos Baldy, at 12,529 feet one of the highest peaks in New Mexico. At noon they stand at a saddle on the south flank of the mountain, 400 feet above the glassy surface of Pecos Baldy Lake and 650 feet below the summit. With thunder rumbling in the distance, they prepare to start the final, steep ascent, only to be driven back by a flash of lightning at the summit, followed by a warning crack of thunder. Retreating to just below the saddle, they eat an unhurried lunch, hoping the storm will move away. It does, only to be replaced by a much more powerful storm that arrives suddenly from the west, opening with a fearsome prelude of lightning bolts and cracks of thunder and then adding the roar of torrential rain and pea-sized hail. As the party descends pell mell to the lake, the storm intensifies, and they cower in a grove of lodgepole pines before taking cover beneath a tarp set up by a group of campers. After more than an hour of symphonic crescendos and decrescendos and sustained passages of violent intensity, the storm finally abates, and the party emerges to walk through a forest landscape transformed to winter, the two inches of hail mimicking an early snowfall. Three miles down the trail, summer returns as they cross a broad meadow fringed by groves of aspen. The sun shines brilliantly above thunderheads that rise behind the high peaks bounding the Pecos Valley on the west. A massive thunderstorm, growling menacingly, paints the eastern sky a dark blue. The tawny meadow grasses turn golden in the afternoon sun, and the aspens' light green leaves and stark white trunks glow against the backdrop of the approaching storm. The party scurries down the trail ahead of the storm, a few sprinkles and continuous rumbles of thunder reminding them not to tarry in this spectacular play of earth and light and sky.

Sunday, 2003 August 31: Jeremy, Karen, and Carl discover a jewel in the New Mexico back country. Acting at last on a story that ran in the *Albuquerque Journal* nearly two years ago, they spend a day hiking in the Sawtooth Mountains about 100 miles southwest of Albuquerque. The range is small, consisting of a single north-south ridge topped by the eponymous sawtooths and four 800-foot-high knobs that extend west of the ridge like a set of gigantic molars. Each knob is crowned by a fantastic collection of crags and spines and pinnacles, which are accessed by climbing the steep side of the knob. The party investigates the easternmost knob, climbing till they find themselves funneled along a narrow ridge that ends abruptly at a 100-foot-deep cleft in the rock, ending their project of reaching the highest point of the knob. The sun shines brightly out of an azure sky punctuated by plump, white clouds, the land is fresh and green after recent monsoonal rains, and they never see or hear another hiker—this on a three-day weekend that ends in a national holiday tomorrow. This place is a keeper.

Sunday, 2003 September 14: It's a chill, grey day as Jeremy and Carl set off from Taos Ski Valley to climb Wheeler Peak, at 13,161 feet the highest point in New Mexico. (Where's the ubiquitous Walter? He's busy preparing to leave for his freshman year at the University of Chicago. We will miss him.) As they cross timberline, a blustery wind pushes ragged clouds across the landscape, their feet dragging the ground. The wind has attached to each blade of grass a quarter-inch knife-edge of ice, extending due west. At the summit, the wind still howls, but it has banished the clouds, and they are rewarded with—you guessed it—a grand view from the center of the Sangre de Cristo range.

Friday, 2003 September 19: Karen attends her first high-school football game ever, and Carl his first since his own high-school days, as La Cueva plays archrival Mayfield of Las Cruces. This unusual behavior is occasioned by Eleanor's performing at half time in the La Cueva marching band, in which she plays the mellophone in place of her concert instrument, the French horn. Karen's brother Wally, visiting from New York, is supposed to join Karen and Carl at the game, but begs off after spending the day at the Candy Kitchen Wolf Rescue Ranch in western New Mexico, a sanctuary dedicated to the rescue of abused and abandoned captive-bred wolves and wolfdogs. The band is impressive at half time, employing a slinky, marching-on-tiptoes style that has Eleanor marching backwards as often as forwards, quite a change from the late 60's military marching last seen by Carl. With the big show over and La Cueva ahead 14–0 as the third quarter begins, Carl assures Karen that the team can do without their support, and she willingly agrees to leave.

Best Wishes,

Eleanor

Jeremy

Karen

Carl

CMC/TeX

P.S. The photos show J in the Sawtooths, K and C in front of E's cabin at CIMI, and E dressed to kill.