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### A New Mexico Diary

*February 16:* A Sunday with no Religious School prompts us to try downhill skiing at Sandia Peak. It's a sunny day, warm enough even at 10,000 feet. Resuming skiing after a thirteen-year hiatus, Carl breaks nothing and decides skiing is not a bad idea. Jeremy and Eleanor take a day of lessons, from which they emerge enthusiastic for more. Karen steadfastly refuses to try skiing, but enjoys relaxing with a book at the base lodge. All agree we should take advantage of this convenient skiing opportunity, which can be reached from our house by a 45-minute drive or by trekking just half a mile to the Sandia Peak Tram and taking it to the top of the slopes.

*February 22:* We spent yesterday in Washington, D.C., with Karen's brother Kenny, his fiancée Mary, and son David. A morning tour of the White House—the President and his entourage drove in just as we were leaving—was followed by a tour of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, where we saw stacks and stacks of bills without getting any richer. After a late lunch, we took the subway to Dupont Circle, where we disproved the conjecture that the escalator there is longer than the escalator at Woodley Park/Zoo, next stop on the Red Line. Karen's brother Wally drove in from Syracuse in the late afternoon, and we all celebrated his 50th birthday at a restaurant on Connecticut Avenue. Why a trip to Washington? Karen's niece Sarah gets married today to Ted Turner (no, not the the biggest private landowner in New Mexico, who could make us all rich off the small change from his gift to the UN). The wedding ceremony is beautiful, Sarah in white and the bridesmaids, led by Sarah's sister Anna, elegantly dressed in black. Eleanor is thrilled when she is drafted to be the flower girl; fortunately she brought a black dress that matches the bridesmaids perfectly. At the post-wedding party, the bouquet falls into Eleanor's hands, and the garter is grabbed by Karen's brother Jay, father of the bride.

*February 26:* Eleanor, turned eight just two days ago, sits down to a breakfast of leftover cheese pizza and proclaims loudly, "I'm sick of eating pizza!" Carl's polite question, "Why is that?" is met by a prompt rejoinder, "Because I've had it seven meals in a row!" The further meek inquiry, "But why did you do that?" elicits the emphatic response, "Because I like it so much!" Neither party volunteering further comment, the conversation lapses, and the pizza disappears.

*March 16:* Smith's Supermarket puts Yoplait yogurt on super sale, and we buy the entire stock—twenty cups—of White Chocolate Raspberry. Jeremy, convinced that his baseball career depends on increasing his intake of calcium, has for the last six months consumed two or three cups of yogurt a day, but his taste is not catholic, consisting entirely and only of Yoplait White Chocolate Raspberry. Try offering him White Chocolate *Strawberry*, and he turns up his nose so far that he has to be pried off the ceiling.

*March 21:* Unnerved by a cup of "squishy" yogurt, Jeremy quits eating White Chocolate Raspberry, leaving a dozen cups unconsumed in our refrigerator.

*June 5:* We fly to Denver, where we are met by Carl's parents, who drove from Oklahoma to pick us up at the new airport. Baseball fans Jeremy and Carl want to see the afternoon game between the Rockies and the Padres at Coors Field and persuade Grandpa and Eleanor to accompany them. The game is a typical Rockies hitfest: their Murderer's Row pulverizes the Padres' pitching, but their own pathetic pitching is shelled in return. Jeremy is pleased as the game extends into extra innings—more excitement for your money—but Eleanor gets impatient to leave. Only some artful delaying by Carl keeps everyone in his seat till Larry Walker ends the game with a dramatic two-run shot to right center in the bottom of the eleventh, his second homer of the game.

*June 8:* Carl's brother Doug and his son Kevin joined us in Denver on Friday. Kevin, who will be working in Boulder for the summer, brought along three tiny turtles, red-bellied sliders freshly taken from the Wisconsin River. Eleanor fell in love with the turtles, so Kevin, after consulting Karen and Carl, offered her one. Eleanor's new turtle, promptly named Sherlock Holmes, accompanies us today as we drive through the Rockies, all of us having hitched a ride back to Albuquerque with Grandpa and Grandma. Taking a break from driving, we spend the morning at Great Sand Dunes National Monument east of Alamosa, Colorado, where winds howling through low passes in the Sangre de Cristo range have piled up enormous dunes, some 700 feet high, the tallest in North America. We attack the dunes with gusto on a cool, cloudy day. The graceless floundering characteristic of walking on dunes is reduced somewhat today, as the dunes are firm after torrential rains last night. Jeremy and Karen trudge all the way to top of the tallest dune. The down side to the cool weather comes at the beginning and the end of the hike, when we have to cross icy Medano Creek. Though the creek is only ankle deep, the crossing can just barely be accomplished before the feet go numb with cold.

*June 14:* Jeremy and Eleanor finish their Little League seasons with team picnics. Jeremy played first, second, and short for the A's and batted third in the order. He was pleased with his batting average of .579, an improvement of 500 points over the previous season. Playing in a three-team girls' softball league, Eleanor's team, the Cardinals, was always enthusiastic, despite winning only two games. Early in the season Eleanor stole third on a passed ball, but found herself engaged in a friendly chat with her good friend Marisol, who remained anchored at third. The opposing team slowly realized that two runners were on third, but then got so excited that they threw the ball away, allowing Marisol to score and Eleanor to stay on third.

*June 28:* Carl attends the first meeting of the Coalition for Excellence in Science Education, which has organized to resist attempts to introduce creationism into science education in New Mexico's public schools and to ensure that public-school students are exposed to fundamental scientific concepts such as evolution by natural selection and the antiquity of the earth. "Creation science" is an oxymoron, a set of sectarian religious beliefs dressed up in scientific-sounding jargon, distinguished from real science because it has no predictive or explanatory power. Isn't it telling that not so long ago science sought the approval of religion, but now creationists crave scientific endorsement of their religious beliefs?

*July 17:* Jeremy and Eleanor conclude the six-week summer session at the Albuquerque Academy with performances by their Story Theater classes. In the classic burlesque skit "Paid in Full," Jeremy gives a convincing performance as the fast-talking boss who calculates that he owes his employee nothing for the entire year. Eleanor completes her third year in Children as Authors; this year she surprised us by writing and illustrating a book called "My Jewish Life." Jeremy took a course in Life Skills, where he learned to sew, cook, garden, and give first aid.

*July 26:* Carl sees *Henry V* performed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, a replica of the original, which opened this summer on the South Bank of the Thames in London. The only tickets remaining for the afternoon performance are in the yard. They're the cheapest tickets anyway, and though you have to stand and are exposed to the elements, if you muscle your way to the front, you can rest your chin right on the stage. Steady rain soaks the yard as the performance begins, but fails to dampen the impression produced by the powerful performance of an all-male cast. Carl has never liked Shakespeare much, but this performance is unforgettable. The rain ends about halfway through, and the Sun peeks from behind the English clouds just as King Harry stumbles through his famous interview with Princess Catherine.

*August 3:* Jeremy and Eleanor return home after a week at Camp Oranim, a Jewish camp near Santa Fe. Though the week was marred by nearly continuous monsoonal rains, they are bursting with stories of the great times they had and are eager to return next summer.

*August 11:* In the middle of an eleven-day vacation in Southern California (we again take advantage of the generous hospitality of Abby Hellwarth in Santa Monica), Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl go whale watching. We skipped this trip last summer because Carl pooh-poohed the chances of summer whale sightings in Southern California, particularly the advertised, but rare and reclusive blue whales, largest creatures on the planet. What he didn't know was that blues began spending the summer in the Santa Barbara Channel in 1991, and sightings are now routine. Reports of these sightings somehow found their way to Eleanor, who forgives Carl only now as we step aboard the *Condor* at 8:00 am in Santa Barbara Harbor. The air is cool, the skies overcast, but we are spared the morning fog that plagues the California coast at this time of year. Our only regret is that Karen, fearing

sea sickness, has opted not to join us. Steaming far west to the area between Point Concepcion and San Miguel Island, we are rewarded with a beautiful, sunny day and about 25 blue whales, blowing repeatedly as they cruise along the surface before disappearing into the depths with a fluke-up dive. We also see two fin whales, a minke whale, dozens of sea lions, a seal carcass, California flying fish, oil slicks from natural seeps in the Channel (you can spot the slicks because oil does calm the waters), and herds of thousands of common dolphins, some of which surf alongside the boat for half an hour. Jeremy and Eleanor, mesmerized by this marine spectacle, maintain their interest for the whole day, which is a long stretch since we don't get back to the Harbor till 5:30 pm.

*August 14:* Still enjoying our stay in Southern California, we saw the Cubs beat the Dodgers 4–2 at Dodger Stadium two nights ago and the Reds shut out the Padres 2–0 in a one-hitter at San Diego last night. The Reds' pitcher, Mike Morgan, threw a perfect game through six innings. Jeremy and Carl were shocked to find the Padres fans cheering when the perfect game was shattered by a lead-off single in the seventh. Today we take the trolley to the Mexican border and walk across to Tijuana. We discover that Tijuana has cleaned up its act. There are plenty of opportunities for buying Mexican arts and crafts, and we all stagger back across the border laden with purchases.

*August 18:* Today is the first day of school at Double Eagle Elementary. Jeremy is persuaded to give White Chocolate Raspberry yogurt another try, on the grounds that otherwise his lunch box will be empty. Neither Jeremy nor Eleanor shows much enthusiasm for lunching at the Double Eagle cafeteria. Last year Jeremy's class, displaying a touching devotion to the state flower, voted to name the cafeteria the Yucca-teria.

*September 1:* We leave Lubbock, Texas, where we spent the Labor Day weekend with Carl's sister Linda and her family. We bring home quite a haul: cousin Natalie's large, handmade doll house on loan, four horned toads for yard release, four sweatshirts embroidered with whales and horses and airplanes by Linda's computer-powered sewing machine, and one wooden clock in the shape of a whale, which prompted the trip. After occupying her own room in June, Eleanor declared that she wanted a whale clock like the Snoopy clock in Jeremy's room. Jeremy, flush with expertise gained in a summer carpentry class at the Albuquerque Academy, volunteered to make the clock. But where to find the tools? Fortunately Uncle Tom, who made the Snoopy clock for us years ago and just recently completed a pool table, offered his well equipped workshop for the operation. Grandpa and Grandma Caves joined us to witness the spectacle. Under Uncle Tom's supervision, Jeremy created a unique timepiece, which combines art and utility in the pleasing manner of good wood work.

*September 11:* Jeremy has begun long-term orthodontic treatment to correct an underbite and to make room for adult teeth. The first step, to expand his upper dental arch, is accomplished by a vicious-looking appliance that is expanded every day. Installed just two weeks ago, the expander has already opened a gap more than a quarter of an inch wide between his front teeth. The gap should close over the next few weeks, while the inactivated appliance remains in place for several months as new bone grows in the expanded arch.

*September 14:* A polite, but insistent handwritten notice appears on the door to Eleanor's room, taped above a blue box labeled "Eleanor":

*This is my mail box. Please put anything you have to say in it and I will get to it as soon as possible. I put out my mail box because I dont want to be bothered. Also if I have any real mail please put it in here. If it is Ergent like theres a fire please feel free to come in.*

*Thank you, Eleanor*

*September 18:* Wondering how Karen is spending her time since quitting her job last January? More time devoted to Jeremy and Eleanor, computer assistant in Jeremy's class at Double Eagle and science teacher in Eleanor's class, member of Double Eagle's PTA Board, member of Congregation Albert's Board of Trustees, chair of Albert's Membership Committee, and leader of a new multi-age, Jewish-interest Girl Scout troop, which has its first meeting today. The highlight of the meeting is a skit about Johnny Appleseed, whose apples are even now harvested for the traditional Rosh Hashanah apples and honey, and Honi, Johnny's Jewish predecessor, who planted carob trees from Judea to Galilee 2,000 years ago. Since it takes 70 years for a carob to bear fruit, Honi was planting solely for posterity. The skit features the younger members of the troop growing from apple and carob seeds to trees bearing apples and Hershey bars. The plan for the next meeting is to have the girls make miniature sukahs for their Beanie Babies.

*October 7:* A bobcat, its back curiously arched, drinks from the ground-level bird bath just outside our breakfast room. We stare wide-eyed as it drinks its fill. Then it returns our stare unblinkingly for a long minute. Though it chooses to break off the staring contest, it lets us know we didn't win by sauntering away with the insouciance that only a cat can muster.

*October 12:* Dawn breaks cold, grey, and windy, clouds stretching 50 miles west from the crest of the Sandias. Though sunlight glints off mesas far to the west, snow flurries scurry across the Rio Grande Valley, each a thin veil that attacks us with a furious, but ineffectual pelting of flakes, like a baby waving its fists. The earth, still warm, melts the flakes on contact. The Sun, retreating toward winter, but still full of fight, breaks up the clouds and leaves a crisp autumn day, with sunlight and shadow quarreling over space all the way to the horizon.

*November 15:* Excitement strikes with the first big snowstorm of the season. Jeremy and Eleanor sled down the driveway and examine snowflakes through a magnifying glass, and Carl tries out his cross-country skis. As the snow softens to perfect packing conditions under bright afternoon sunshine, Jeremy and Eleanor face off against Carl in a spirited snowball fight, after which neither side concedes defeat.

*November 27:* We spend Thanksgiving Day at Kenny's house, near San Francisco. Preparation for and consumption of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner (plus some chocolate not available to the Pilgrims) leaves just enough time for an assembly line—fold letter, add picture, stuff envelope, apply mailing label, moisten and attach stamp, apply return address label, seal envelope—which prepares 125 of these letters for mailing.

Best Wishes,

Eleanor

Jeremy

Karen

Carl

CMC/TEX

P.S. The photo shows Jeremy and Eleanor, windblown and suntanned, watching for marine life in the Santa Barbara Channel from the deck of the *Condor*.