

III Nava Adé III

This one is perhaps a little off-topic, but in a city where everything is sacred, we moved recently to Nava Adé, an award-winning community that is the envy of Easterners and object of so many local residents' quest for perfection in this life. The name is supposed to mean "belonging to the earth," in what Indian language is unknown. All the streets are themed accordingly, with resounding addresses like Raindance Lane, Laughing Crow, Waking Sky, Dancing Ground and others freshly minted by market research.

To visit this paradigm of suburban planning, steer for Santa Fe Place (formerly known, confusingly apparently, as Villa Linda Mall), turn left on Rodeo Road, make a right on Richards and hang another right on Gov. Miles where you will see the brightly colored pennants of the development's billboard.

We were very glad to move our small family to Nava Adé and have no complaint about the environs, despite the fact that there is a clear view of J. C. Penney's over our

backyard fence. The neighbors are nice. And the asphalt walks around the compound are nice. Did I mention that the neighbors are nice?

The reason we were glad finally to live close to the earth was that we had suffered the unearthly noise and annoyances of the City of the Holy Faith for long enough. Like many, we had begun to tire of Santa Fe's signature charm, a word that had come to mean little more than decrepitude to our way of thinking. You have to share the driveway with the neighbor. Closets? Their absence has never bothered any of the many, many tenants before.

Historic adobe casita within walking distance of the Plaza - where no right-minded person wants to set foot anyway - signified a run-down rental having a harridan for a landlady who had spent all her divorce money and took repairs out of your deposit.

Perhaps "Belonging to the earth" was inspired by the bumper sticker that says, "The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth." It would make sense in such a slick suburb as Nava Adé.

Al Gore, in his 1992 book *Earth in the Balance*, comments that we as a society have lost touch with spirit. Never mind the Earth: we have failed to honor the spirit that animates it. If you want testimony about the spiritual bankruptcy (and hypocrisy) of 21st century America, Santa Fe style, drive out to the sprawling faux pueblo of Nava Adé. You will find an excellent example of modern-day consumer religion. After stealing the land and nearly everything else from the red man, the conquerors must now have at least a tincture of his spirituality.

Don't get me wrong. In comparison with other developments, Nava Adé deserves its awards. Drainage systems are superb, the plantings for the most part are zeriscaped indigenous species, and the houses sit with a minimal footprint on the earth. It's only that the developers have laid things on with a trowel. How can one seriously write to intelligent human beings from Whistling Moon Lane?

In my next column I promise to return to more usual subjects.



Looking toward the Mall.

XVI

III Sandia III

My publisher friend Skip wanted me to see the oldest site in the state, so we got into the SUV and drove toward the Sandia Mountains between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. It was a sparkling summer day and the fields were thick with sunflowers because of the recent record rainfall. We took the Turquoise Trail through Madrid, a derelict mining town newly invaded by a wave of aging hippies, Buddhist vegetarian past-life regressionists and bleach-blond Texas divorcees starting out in the gallery business. Before Madrid came Cerillos, a dry, dusty, fading little village with gigantic cottonwoods shading the Tombstone-era wooden sidewalks and saloons.

Many Westerns are shot in the Cerillos Hills. There is a famous location there called the Movie Ranch. Indeed, if you crop out the million-dollar houses you are left with nothing but junipers, rocks, cholla and rattlesnakes. It could be the nineteenth century or dawn of time.



Soon we left the Ortiz Mountains and followed back roads to the foot of Sandia. Skip pointed out a shoot 'em up roadhouse where he said gangs used to congregate on their trips to Vegas. We visited the caboose-sized post office in Stanley. To my wonder, I spotted a church for sale alongside the highway. We also found a private archeological museum off the road in a trailer park, but we were unwilling to pay the entrance fee after seeing a sample of its holdings through the doorway. Arrowheads and cowboy art.

We wound through the deep forest up and up toward the summit of Sandia, the familiar hulking rock that dominates the Albuquerque skyline. At the top we took pictures to prove we were there and then took a dirt road following a murmuring stream that ran down a side valley that would lead us to Sandia Cave. The road had treacherous ruts and gaping ditches and we expected at any time to meet a fallen tree or lose an axle, which would be the end of our adventure.

The cave where Sandia Man was discovered—the oldest known human bones in the United States—lies perched on the face of a cliff about midway down the mountains. Whoever lived here had a wonderful view but I would not like to have carried the water up.

If you know anything about American Indians, you know that they were Mongolians who got lost and strayed across the Bering land-bridge chasing woolly mammoths. Before they knew it, they were in New Mexico, where they thoughtfully deposited Clovis points outside the town of that name before continuing south to build pyramids and do some head hunting. Clovis and the Bering land-bridge used to be articles of faith among anthropologists. Nothing predated Clovis, that was it, there were no American Indians before about 10,000 years ago, and those were all Mongoloids of short stature, stocky

build, almond shaped eyes, off white to yellowish skin coloration, Asian shovel teeth, straight, black hair, and a tendency toward excessive ear wax production.



Recent critics, however, have not only dislodged the Bering land-bridge theory from its sacrosanct position, but also have attacked that Holy Grail, Clovis points. Professor Cyclone Covey of Wake Forest University has noted there were predecessors to Clovis in the so-called Sandia style. He suggested that Sandia shouldered points corresponded to the Epigravettian and Solutrean cultures in Europe. After all, the aesthetic care lavished on Clovis points presupposed some sort of background. And Clovis did not come from a westernly direction (i.e., Mongolia). The fact that eastern finds far outnumbered western pointed logically to an eastern origin. Clovis was simply the American manifestation of the Magdalenian and Aurignacian in Spain and France, an invention of the same Cro-Magnon hunting culture responsible for the beautiful Lascaux cave paintings.

So Sandia Man was a white European? Probably. After seeing his den I could almost imagine what he looked like—Patrick Stewart of Starship Enterprise with a bearskin wrapped around him, say. Boy, was this going to make the “real” American Indians of today mad! Maybe science would do better to just seal the cave shut and brush Sandia Man under the carpet.

You'll have to go there and decide for yourself.



Turquoise Trail.

XVII

Witches and Angels in Taos W

Why was it so cold in the middle of June? And where were all the residents? And what was that eerie feeling we got?

A Hopi proverb goes, "When Taos is up, Oraibi is down, and when Oraibi is up, Taos is down." We went to Taos recently to investigate the truth of this saying.

The first shock came when we tried to visit Taos Pueblo, home of the northernmost of New Mexico's 22 Pueblo Indian tribes. Take the road out of town past all the chic galleries and bear right at Georgia O'Keeffe Tire Company. Sorry, just kidding.

A huge sign at the entrance proclaims, with mixed signals, "Welcome, Visitors. \$10 Entrance Fee Per Person. Closed." We took this to mean the way was closed to automotive traffic, and parked, and walked in.

Just as we rounded the corner into the large plaza, two young women ran us down in their late model Lexus. "The pueblo is closed. Leave the way you came in, now," yelled one of them. They followed us out at a crawl.

Back in town around the plaza, we began to notice other signs of the spirit of Taos as a cold wind whipped up and dark clouds rolled in over the mountains. One knickknack turned the usual greeting on its head and warned, "Mi casa es mi casa." Instead of the usual CLOSED sign, several stores sported a variation that said simply SHUT. Among the more bizarre items we chanced upon while window-shopping were: a lady skeleton in a sequined gown, a turquoise skull, a coyote selling watches and carrots pinned inside his overcoat, an automated Medicine Man with rolling eyes and buffalo horns that dispensed Native American wisdom for a dollar in a glass booth, a shrine to Kit Carson ("Indian agent"), a gallery that specialized in dog art, another that concentrated on naked witches (balanced by an angel emporium across the street), and . . . and . . . and.



We solved one mystery when we got home. The "Taos Hum" is a faint, low humming noise between 30 and 80 Hz on the frequency scale heard in and near the town of Taos, we learned. Not only is its source a mystery, but its peculiar qualities are too: only about 2 percent of the 1,400 residents can hear it. It has been described as sounding like a diesel engine idling in the distance. Some hearers who are bothered by it have tried acoustic quieting devices to block it out -- to no effect. Investigations by the likes of Sandia National Laboratories have failed to find a source or even a plausible explanation.

"Northern New Mexico is a hot spot where witches, wiccans and Satanists go to get the energy of evil they want and need," we learned from another source. Taos and its wider environs are the location of a society of Druid shamans, the most-visited Hanuman Hindu temple in the U.S., a Wiccan seminary and teaching coven, and an annual Green Man festival. Until about 1992, when it lost its place to Sedona, Taos was a favorite mecca for crystal gazers and New Age spiritualists. How much of this reputation goes back to Popé, the leader of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 executed for witchcraft by the Spanish, we cannot say.

All we know is that for the visitor, Taos is a cold, inhospitable place where you will find just about anything you go looking for, and a lot of things you never imagined. Whereas Hopi has fallen on bad times, the magical star of Taos is ascending. Go if you must, but take warm clothes and put up an intention, as they say.

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Ш Mount Wheeler Ш

When a Phoenix business associate invited me to climb Mt. Wheeler with him, I took it as something I had to do or die. After all, at over 13,000 feet it was the highest point in New Mexico. Besides, we would have a male bonding experience. I might lose the account if I didn't stick my chin out, flash my teeth and say, "Race you to the top."

Never mind that it was early fall and the whole wilderness area had been declared off limits by the park service because of fire hazard until the month before, which had brought torrential rains. Forget that one climber a year was killed or paralyzed by freak lightning strikes. And that I was about as much in shape as a consumptive customer at an opium den.

Notwithstanding these warning signs, I went to the Coleman store and other stops about town and loaded myself down with all the requisite purchases. I marshaled hiking boots, down-filled parka, thermal socks, woolen slacks, gaiters, fine net tee shirt, lambs-wool pullover, rakish Irish tweed cap, fire-making kit, rope, tracking rod, emergency flare,

whistle, U.S. Geologic Survey 1:25,000 map, water containers, decontamination tablets, lightweight blanket, compass, Swiss Army knife, flashlight with short-wave radio, and emergency food like power bars.

With all these appurtenances of modern civilization, I abandoned any hope of turning my climb into a mini-Vision Quest to commune with the higher powers. I was determined just to survive. It was eight miles to the summit—and eight miles back. Indians venerated and shunned it.

We rendezvoused at the Taos Ski Basin, a yodelly, yuppy type of resort that was almost deserted in the expectation of snow. If this ingredient was lacking on the ski slopes, though, it had fallen in abundance on the trails. By 10,000 feet were ankle deep in it. I had to turn back before the last ascent because the stuff was up to my knees in places and I was having an opium den attack with my breathing. My friend slogged on alone.

Thank God for cell phones, even with exorbitant roaming rates! After being incommunicado for six hours, as the last light of day faded. I received a call for help from my friend, who cheerfully told me he was within sight of home. I waited in the parking lot. The next phone call brought news he was lost, without a map on him, had fallen several times, his flashlight was failing, he was almost out of energy, food, and water, and he was beginning to get cold. Then the lines stopped working.

I set out after him, steering through the woods roads by sheer instinct. I found him stumbling in exhaustion through the snow. In an un-macho manner, he said he was scared and thoroughly humbled. It had been a techno climb for me, but for him it was nothing less than a vision quest of raw beauty and profound significance.

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I had to think it was the Indian-turned-white-man who bailed out a white-man-turned-Indian this time. If the ancient Indians regarded Mt. Wheeler as the home of the spirits, they knew at least enough to worship it from a distance.





Mt. Wheeler.



XIX

Ш Chimayo Ш

It's not marked on my calendar, but once a year pilgrims converge on this picturesque village nestled in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to seek a miracle cure or pay their respects to the Virgin Mary. Even in the snow they walk or crawl on legs that are gnarled stumps along the highway through the Indian pueblos north of Santa Fe risking being run over by drunks and people on their way to peace rallies and meditation sessions to arrive at the small chapel in time for the priest's blessing and the chance to take away some of the legendary holy sand from the Santuario de Chimayo.

On the way we visited Nambe Falls, the Tesuque Flea Market, Espanola with its Sikh temple and the Santa Fe Opera. Partially open air in its construction, the latter serves



as a monument to the pretension and denial that epitomize Santa Fe, the city of Holy Faith. People wear tuxedos and cowboy hats to see *Carmen* and Wagner. And if it rains? Presumably the show goes on.

The Sikh capital in the New World is Sombrillo, just off Hwy. 285, an entire settlement devoted to the white-garbed, unsmiling, turbaned set. Tall, brawny Sikhs captured the market for security services with their impressive scimitars in the 1950s and made New Mexico their headquarters. Even today height is a requirement—or consequence—of belonging.

Quaint as the village appears, especially on this harvest home afternoon with the golden acacias rustling in the gentle breeze, Chimayo has its underbelly. It has the highest rate of heroin addiction per capita in the United States. Murder is a fine, old family tradition. Tennis shoes hang from overhead power wires—someone's farewell gesture to an unhappy residence here?

On the other hand, maybe the shoes are votive offerings. In our tour of the grounds we glimpse discarded eye-glasses stuck on the coyote fence and crutches left beside the flowing waters.

A Hungarian photographer with a tripod shoos people away in front of the Santuario to take the perfect picture. Dozens of shops sell religious paraphernalia—statues, glittery icons, Coke bottle caps with pictures of day-glow saints in them, silver *milagro* charms with body parts, legs, feet, eyes, heart, lots of Sacred Hearts of Jesus bound by thorns with flames shooting out of them. *Santeros* (carvers) have set up shop in the alleys. They carve crude *retablos* and figurines of saints and sell them for unholy prices.



A lady from New Orleans is on her hands and knees in the vault of the chapel filling three grocery bags and a plastic bucket with holy dirt. "Leave some for me," begs the man next in line, who had come from Norway.

A quiet biker couple with garish tattoos of roses and death's heads are having ice cream on the main street, a tow-headed boy and waspish girl with them. In the book *Chiva*, Chellis Glendinning uses creative nonfiction to merge the global epic of heroin trafficking with the human-scale story in this obscure desert town, as holy as it is unholy.

Every Easter in a secret ceremony closed to outsiders, the Penitentes nail a parishioner to the cross for a mock crucifixion. A vessel catches the victim's blood. According to anthropologists, this dolorosa vein of Catholicism stems from sixteenth century Spain, where sacrificial bloodletting with thorns placed in lips and other tender spots of the body became popularized due to the influence of crypto-Muslims from Africa.

We had to conclude that in spiritual terms powerful good attracts powerful evil, and powerful evil invites powerful good to try to redeem it. Both were in full manifestation in Chimayo, so depending on your motives, go there forewarned.

XX

Ш Four Corners Ш

Few people are aware of it, but New Mexico has a third type of Indian nation besides those of the twenty-one pueblos, Navajo and Apache. They are the Utes of the extreme northwest corner of the state in the Four Corners. Inconspicuous and unvisited except perhaps at their roadside casino, the Utes formerly lived as far south as Abiquíu. Never reduced by warfare, they came to form an important trade link for the Spanish, bringing furs and other valuable commodities from the huge expanses of the Great Basin and Rocky Mountains.

We had to stop at the Ute Mountain Utes' casino because we were told that the buffalo burgers are the biggest on earth. After making a decent dent in our gargantuan lunch, we proceeded to the Four Corners Monument. It is the only place in the country where four states meet. It lends its name to the region showcased in this book.

I'm not saying you feel any different for standing on a spot where your body physically occupies four different states of the Union. Belly in Utah, butt in New Mexico and two arms in Arizona and Colorado. It is no navel of the earth comparable, say, to the Oracle of Delphi in Greece or the Pyramids of Geza. There are no lay lines. It's just a pullout beside an abandoned gas station. But travel on down the highway and you will soon be in the presence of a true power spot, a place reeking of sulphur and singed skin.

We were never able to identify it, so we simply called it Devil's Tower. It was the granite and basalt plug to an eons-old volcano that had eroded away to leave a massively ominous rock butte with ashes and cinders at its feet. Absolutely no plant grew within miles of it, not even creosote or cacti. There was nothing but sharp rocks and black sand. You may as well be in the Land of Mordor.

If there is a real red devil with horns and tail, this is where he lives. Rumbling ducts of lava that produced the menacing upper mass of darkness go down to Hell. The highway that goes past it is Route 666. It is, quite simply, the Devil's address on earth.



Devil's Tower.

Ш Tent Rocks Ш

The Pueblo of Cochiti has always considered this a sacred site. Their name for it is Kasha-Katuwe, "white cliffs." The 90-foot-tall cone-shaped tent rock formations are the products of volcanic eruptions that occurred six to seven million years ago and left pumice, ash and tuff deposits over 1,000 feet thick.

We have visited before the center of this volcanic activity in the heart of the Jemez Mountains, where the cauldron-shaped Valles Grande stretches miles across. That mega-volcano strewn burning rock fragments as far as here on the Pajarito Plateau while searing hot gases blasted down the slopes. One still sees small, rounded, translucent obsidian (volcanic glass) created by rapid cooling along the walls of the path that winds up through the formations.

Take the Canyon Trail (1.5 miles) up a steep, narrow umbilical-cord-like sandy path blocked here and there by boulders and tree trunks on a 630-foot ascent to the mesa top for excellent views of the Sangre de Cristo, Jemez, Ortiz, Sandia mountain ranges



and the Rio Grande Valley. You can see across Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Santa Ana and Sandia Indian Reservation lands to Bernalillo and the outskirts of Albuquerque in the south, fifty miles away.

Perched on top of the tapering hoodoos are boulder caps that protect the softer pumice and tuff below. A similar geologic process made the humped Camel Rock overlooking Pojoaque Pueblo north of Santa Fe.

Because of the layering of volcanic deposits, bands of gray are interspersed with beige and pink-colored rock. A bewildering collection of small rocks is immured in the dug-out walls of the arroyo.

Plant life includes Indian paintbrush, Apache plume, rabbitbrush, cholla, chamisa, manzanita, and prickly pear cactus. Sadly, the piñon is mostly dead as in other parts of New Mexico, victim of the bark beetle that spread destruction particularly in the late 1990s. In spring and fall, corresponding to migration times, you can spot ruby-crowned kinglets, house finches, violet-green swallows, hepatic tanagers and a variety of hawks. Ravens hang around year-long.

There is more animal life than most people would think in these barren-appearing lands. We have already described the coatis and fishers, unprotected except by their own stealth because no conservationist is aware of their presence and they do not make the lists. The song of the coyotes drifts over the heath on moonlit nights. Bear and elk are not unheard of.

A friend who lives nearby has been chronicling the exploits of the packrats that scurry around so furtively in her backyard. She lined the driveway with regularly spaced, glow-in-the-dark marbles but was chagrined to notice that some of them kept disappearing, leaving gaps in the nightly effect. Staking out the terrain, she witnessed a packrat rolling one away. She tracked the culprit to its den beneath a cholla, where she discovered a horde of the missing marbles. We cautioned her not to tell others she had been missing marbles and now had found them.

Tourists and residents often speak of Sante Fe's "high desert" climate and landscape. But this is not desert. Semi-arid is the correct term. For there is water, and it rains and snows more often than most people expect.

Make an outing to the Tent Rocks, but if an afternoon thunderstorm should develop, do not attempt the Canyon Trail, for it can turn into a raging torrent in a matter of minutes.



Tent Rocks.

XXII

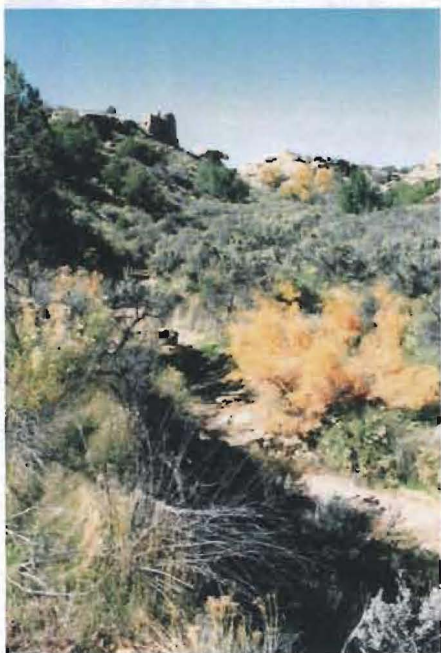
Ш Hovenweep Ш

Only the mileage signs convinced us there was something worth seeing at the end of the maze of blacktop roads that led through bone-dry, rocky sheep country. We didn't know what to expect because we knew no images or write-ups. Suddenly amidst the juniper-studded dunes of baked sand a rocky tower could be glimpsed, then another. Even marauding enemies would never guess it was there, and maybe that was the reason it was.

Hovenweep lies in a no-man's land on the state line between Utah and Colorado. It is the farthest north in a series of crumbling Ancestral Pueblo towns that stretches to Casas Grandes in Mexico. Unlike the others, it has not been extensively "restored." Its sandstone watchtowers ringing the rim of a green inner canyon appear much as they did seven hundred years ago.

Dog-lovers should know that pets are allowed as long as on a leash. The paths loop around the entire site, affording ever-changing perspectives back down and across the canyon in the center. They are well made and easy to negotiate.

The first engineering feat that impressed me was the way in which the stones were dressed, squared off like large, nearly regular blocks. Some towers were round, some were square. The stones were fitted together minimal mortar and still stood after centuries but for the top few feet which the elements had claimed. How had the Hovenweepians managed it?



A ranger explained that they had dropped naturally occurring slabs off the cliffs and broken them into all those regular building blocks. Really? Had the rangers tried that? Well, maybe they had used harder rocks to break up softer ones. But the materials of these walls did not look very soft to me. I had heard that in experiments, rock abrading rock reduced the edge used for striking to unusable within hours.

It seemed more reasonable to think that the Hovenweepians had iron, though this supposition flew in the face of American Indian Studies 101.

Harvard professor Barry Fell and co-workers with the Epigraphic Society in Boston studied the Southwest cultures building in succession upon the earliest known

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"advanced" people, called Hohokam, and concluded they were primarily Libyans and Berbers.

North Africa was the source of everything that was distinctive about these vanished peoples: knowledge of desert irrigation systems, adobe, kivas (a Libyan word meaning "assembly house"), mathematically designed roads and architecture. What we call the Ancestral Pueblo went into eclipse and their towns were abandoned with the advent of wandering and unsettled Athabaskan tribes from the north—today's Navajo and Apache. The older Indians retreated south, where they established pueblos along the Rio Grande. Fortress-type pueblos like those of the Hopi, Acoma and Zuni never fell to the new invaders.

And where did the Navajo and Apache come from? Alaska, most agree. But before that? According to the Canadian scholar Ethel Stewart, who made the subject her life's work, the short answer is they were a mixed multitude of Chinese, Uigur Turks, and Tibetans who fled before Genghis Khan. The Mongolian leader conquered Tibetan-ruled Xia Xian in western China in 1224, putting more than 10 million of its subjects to the sword. In support of her thesis, Stewart adduced hundreds of correspondences between Navajo and Apache and the languages of Chinese Turkistan, and even folk tales about Genghis Khan and Xia Xian soldiers and princesses.

After Hovenweep, I can only say there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than our Indigenous American Studies 101 dreams of.



Hovenweep.



Hovenweep.

XXIII

Ш Aztec Ruins Ш

The name, of course, is supposed to be a misnomer, just as much as Montezuma's Castle in Arizona. No Aztecs are recorded as having ever lived at this small site just east of Farmington. It has stone construction techniques similar to Chaco Canyon and is believed to have been built about the same time, by the same people . . . whoever *they* were.

When we visited this site, the cottonwoods along the Animas River were aflame with fall colors. The grounds were thick with sage, which we could smell everywhere.

Be sure to go into the small museum before you tour the ruins. We were surprised to be able to view there a clay pipe, one of many smoked in the kivas. The excavators tested the residue of the smoking mixture in it and found, along with tobacco and sage, *datura*.

Datura stramonium, or jimson weed, was ingested and smoked by Indians of North, South and Central America as a hallucinogen. It has a rather forbidding reputation. Also called

loco weed, it was nearly the downfall of the Jamestown colony. Because of its popularity among the first settlers there it acquired the name Jamestown, or jimson, weed. Zuni rain priests smeared the powdered root into their nose, eyes and mouth in order to be able to fly with the birds. Recreational users report leaving their bodies and flying about in spirit.

Datura is a large, vigorous plant, growing up to 10 feet tall, one that has bristly leaves with showy trumpet-shaped flowers. Their color varies from white to yellow, pink, and pale purple. The fruit is a spiny egg-like capsule that splits open when ripe to release numerous hard, tiny seeds.

Author and ethnobotanist Wade Davis discovered datura to be an ingredient in the secret formula used to make zombies in Haiti. After a paralyzing powder is blown into the victim's hut, and upon live burial and digging up, the new zombie is maintained in a state of terror and subservience by regular feeding with datura leaves, pods and beans. Wade theorized that early man in Africa watched ants feed the seeds to their workers to make them docile. This was the origin of the institution of human slavery.

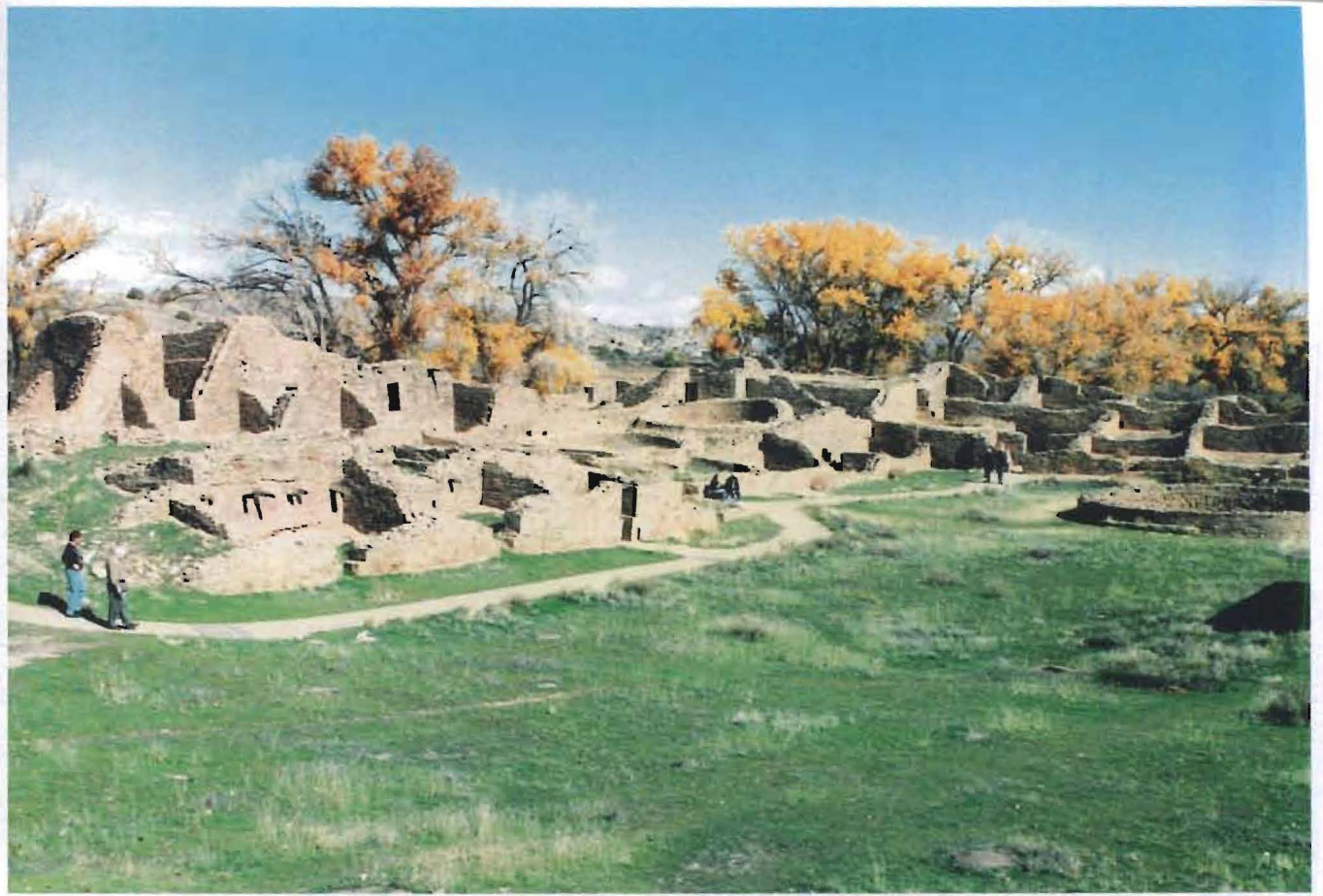
Datura petroglyphs are scattered all over Indian lands. They feature dots and rays anthropologists explain as the result of drug-induced vision questing. One specialist writes that "entoptic phenomena, or phosphenes, are created by the optic system anywhere from the eyeball to the cortex." The Chumash Indians of California were particularly fond of ingesting datura. They venerated the spirit of the plant as Old Woman Momoy.

We had an eerie feeling wandering the apartment chambers, kivas and plazas of Aztec Ruins. It occurred to us that its elite masters could only have relied on slave labor to build such a place. In this respect they copied Chaco Canyon, Casas Grandes and Mesa Verde, towns that are now interpreted as successive capitals of the same culture, flourishing between about 1000 and 1350 c.e. All lie on the same north-south meridian.

According to the Navajo Indians whose intrusions beginning in the thirteenth-century spelled the end of settled agricultural life, these stone cities were "dark places," ruled by "a people who had enormous amounts of power: spiritual power and power over people." When the mighty were overthrown, the succeeding Pueblo Indians adopted a resolute egalitarianism in tribal affairs ever afterwards so that it would never happen again.

We shuddered to think that the name Aztec may not have been far off after all, for the Aztecs, too, had a state founded on subjugation and conquest and do not have a very savory reputation in the history of the Americas.

Don't miss Aztec Ruins but don't overstay your welcome there, for there are angry ghosts.



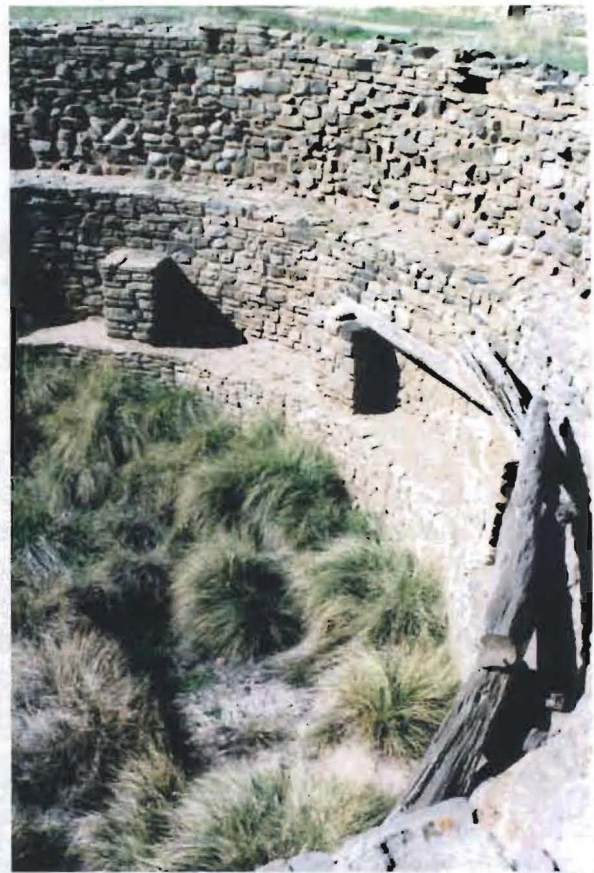
Aztec Ruins.



Reconstructed square kiva.



Masonry.



Exposed underground circular kiva.

XXIV

卐 City of the Holy Faith 卐

It is easy to be irreverent about Santa Fe. From being the camp, hippy artists' mecca of the Sixties and Seventies, it has entered into a long, sure glide toward dull, adobe Disneyland. The city has nirvana seekers of every stripe. These let you know what their beliefs are by bumper stickers, plastering their Subarus and Toyotas in palimpsests that can be peeled back to the days of Volkswagen buses and the Merry Pranksters. I Am Already against the *Next War*, says one. I Brake for Butterflies, says another. A late model VW Vanagon GL has (at random from about twenty covering its rear): Vegetarian for Life, and Support Your Local Universe, and Sustainable HEMP Food, Fuel, Fiber.

Sante Fe may have begun life as the City of the Holy Faith, but today it is the capital of rude. Road rage is common on St. Francis Drive. The ever-so enlightened will run you over on their way to a meditation session. People not only invent their own religions here but obey, selectively, their own rules.

Santa Feans want to save the planet from waste and exploitation, but they are weekend radicals with hot tubs under the desert stars.

The city fathers cannot be bothered to pick up your trash on any reliable schedule, the news is sanitized for the sake of the tourists, and the mail only works erratically. If you call a government office (it is easy to forget, but Santa Fe is the state capital), you are likely to get voice-mail. It is the city of denial and rationalization. The byword is not *manana*, but "yesterday"—sung to the Beatles tune.

The city of Savannah where we moved from is celebrated for its unchanging charm and loveliness. Folks say, however, that its being stuck in the Regency period with its lovely squares and townhouses came about through a curse placed on it. An embittered departing editor of a local paper, one John M. Harney, wrote a scathing poem as he left the city. It ended:

I leave you, Savannah, a curse that is far
The worst of all curses - to remain as you are!

Sante Fe, on the other hand, is blessed, but it is a mixed blessing. No other city has such panoramic views of the mountains. Where else can you find the same atmosphere of casual opera and dead-serious dining, art galleries and bars. There is a lively intelligence that percolates through the city life. But I imagine the dead medicine men are laughing up their sleeves on their nocturnal rounds through the arroyos.

Santa Fe's curse is to keep changing out of recognition, while remaining everyone's private and secret dream. Still, though, there is nothing like it. May it live to be a thousand!



Santa Fe with the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and rainbow.