

First big adventure – the trip from Chicago to California in 1955.

The first 10 years of our marriage were spent in Boston, Syracuse and Chicago. (We didn't know it but we were inching towards the far west. And once we got there we never left.) In 1955, after 6 years in Chicago Eric had advanced to all-but-dissertation in his progress towards a PhD in Philosophy. We were a family of 4, our two daughters were Heath (age 8) and Jennifer (age 3). We were thoroughly disillusioned with Chicago and academia when the president of California State College, Long Beach (later a university) came recruiting and made it sound irresistible - a 6-year old campus starting a Philosophy Department in La La land. The chance to move to California was a dream come true and it didn't take 5 minutes to answer 'yes'.

We decided to start our new adventure by driving across country, since Chicago was our farthest western penetration of this vast and intriguing land. Camping was not a household word in 1955; in fact, it was a thoroughly intimidating idea. We had no equipment, no knowledge of on-road or off-road, and very little money. But we had good friends, Paul and Ellie Diesing, who were already established in Champagne/Urbana and went camping every summer. As soon as they heard we were going to the west coast they wanted to join us; - California was Mecca to all winter-weary mid-westerners, - and would show us the ropes. Heath has only fragments of memory about the trip and Jenny probably remembers only the ecstasy she got from a popsicle in Mesa Verde. (We have always treasured the photos we took of her with her popsicle.) But for us it was a monumental change. We could hardly wait!

So we bought a green Chevy station wagon and camping gear, packed our household for shipment and took off on August 5. We were going to travel in tandem with the Diesings, so went first to Champagne/Urbana. I recently unearthed the journal that Eric began the day, which I remember his starting and often writing entries after an adventurous day, but it was stored in a file for decades. And while it is in faded pencil and his penmanship is challenging, I will transcribe it as best I can to recount the journey as seen through his eyes and mind. He was a gifted writer but loved long and convoluted sentences, and his penmanship was tiny and frequently unintelligible. There are words I simply couldn't make out, but it got easier as it went. The trip was the first of many travel adventures. When I read his account I shivered to think how naïve we were – that he hiked down the Bright Angel Trail in Grand Canyon hatless, waterless and foodless. More foolish than anything Cheryl Strayed could think up. I have shortened and edited his journal and added remembrances of my own, as I discovered early on that our take on events was not always the same. My entries are italicized.

August 5, 1955

We got away about 3:30 in the afternoon, without incident - save, to be sure, a torrential thunder shower that met us halfway down Calumet Lake, and thoroughly tested the pioneer trimness of our roof-top gear. I inspected every item thoroughly as it came off the rack when we got to Urbana, and although it wasn't exactly bone-dry, I am proud to say no significant water damage was done. I tried to read the omen of that downpour, the first water to come from heaven in about 3 weeks in the Chicago area. But as always, if it is an oracle, it remains enigmatic as the Delphian, for there were so many ways, taking into account all the conditions, in which it can be read.

Our first camp was the Deisings' breezeway. After a 45 minute struggle with the most exasperating camp cots ever designed, we set up our pallets. The kids baptized the back of the station wagon. The heat was monumental. We wallowed in our secretions, utterly disrobed, until dawn, undoubtedly sleeping betimes, but aware only of our own misery. And about 9:30 Saturday morning the Great Trek began.

August 6

Far too much was attempted – and accomplished - this first day. All morning long we drove, rather gingerly, thru the Illinois landscape we had never seen before, and were not particularly impressed. It is difficult to account for the failure of this eastern mid-west countryside to please. It is not that it is flat nor that its flora, natural and cultivated, are monotonous. Where could one find such flatness and such horticultural monotony as in the plains of western Missouri – but what grandeur! I suspect our reaction is keyed to the fauna and its artifacts. Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois seem, for the most part, to have been settled by people utterly impoverished in their imaginations and their tastes, if not their energies. The towns of their descendants are nondescript and their attempts at embellishment pathetic, when tried at all. Orange crates might as well serve for houses. The paints lack all luster. No one adapts a fence to the buildings, for

instance. The rooftops show no daring, the very gardens, the planting of old trees, the distribution of bushes and shrubs, lack verve. We felt everywhere that we dealt with those who were emotionally dead to their surroundings – that this is why their forefathers could stop there instead of pushing on, having come so far. I am sure, just observing from the outside, that there is much southern evangelicalism in southern Illinois.

All of which has to be taken back – and much said earlier elsewhere about William Randolph Hearst – when you come to Salem State Park. (*Hearst paid for its restoration in 1919.*) The reconstruction of Lincoln's primitive hometown is truly worth seeing. It has been planned with carefully hidden scholarship and executed with ostentationless good taste. What a sense you get of the time, distance and challenges of the early 19th century struggle with the wilderness. You walk about a village perhaps a mile long, peer into rustic doorways at interiors from which the inhabitants appear to have just departed – maybe at the summons of the Indian bell, you study in elaborate reconstruction the monolithic workings of the mill from which the treadmill oxen seem to have been momentarily withdrawn for a noontime rest. Bending your head to enter the town tavern you sense intimately what must have been like to be a traveler in 1820 or 1830 – size up warily the huge trundle beds with bulbous and bulgy mattresses and comforters, vividly alive. You can smell the swine in the pig pens, chickens in the roosting huts, fodder in the lofts, excreta in the stalls that make the traditional image of Christ's birth look scrubbed. Ellie observed truthfully that the village commons was somewhat too parklike for the circumstances and there were macadam and cement walks instead of boards, or ankle-deep mud paths. But on the other hand I couldn't find a nail in any log, only pegs; and all the roofs, hand-hewn shingled, authentically leaked. (Not that we had a chance to verify the experience. The thunder showers of the preceding day left us high and dry – until, as you shall see, that very night.)

We took that mile hike to the teeth, peering into every window and every Dutch door, stooping for each cold cellar, moving around every shed or lawn. And then set out for a rendezvous with the Diesings at Mark Twain's boyhood home in Hannibal. And what shall I say? It was certainly an ugly town, down to the tobacco spitting slatterns out for a Saturday afternoon's pleasure. The main streets, littered with taverns and snooker parlors, thru the dirty windows of which you could see old cronies playing poker and drinking boiler-makers, reminded me of 63rd St. (in Chicago) without the el. But as Babs insisted, there was a kind of charm about it. Perhaps it was the charm of an indentured and commercial Mississippi River frontage, already hoary with tradition. Perhaps it was the essential strangeness, to an urbanite, of the truck farmer's Saturday night. Perhaps it was Cardiff Hill, at the end of the street, with rickety stairs ascending interminably to a sprinkling of shanties high above. Indeed the town was over-arched by numerous palisades, thru a break in which it spilled. It certainly had something to do with the supposed Twain home – or Tom Sawyer's – who could distinguish? It was a cinch to see how Tom (or Samuel) could beat it out the back window and down over the kitchen roof to after-bedtime freedom with the boys. Aunt Polly's touch was everywhere in that home. It even intruded mercilessly, with benevolent tyranny, into Tom's room, a spare place for a boy, surely. And across the street Becky Thatcher didn't do much better. The wonder of Victorianism, even in legend, is not that all boys were bad but that all girls were good, living such boarding school lives, in the very bosom, or shall we say chest, of their families. I must even confess that the museum attached - one would suppose with typical tourist absurdity, was charming – because it was a mish-mash of the kinds of newspaper clippings, theatre bills, old buttons, etc. a widowed aunt would be likely to collect in attic trunks.

We looked futilely for Hannibal's restaurant. Finally a motel cafe outside of town on Rte 36 caught our trade. And it was quite a catch, given the hunks of beef of various cuts; not gauze, they could stand up. We waited an hour, with Jenny demanding every 30 seconds "Where's my hamburger?" This preyed on our minds in more ways than one, for we had some 65 miles to go before dark, which was already falling, to General Pershing Park, where we were to do our first real camping. The Diesings were ahead of us, luckily, and guided us to our site with lantern waving. The car was full of unpleasantries (and not for the last time in these 3 days of haste) as we rushed on to our rendezvous. We got there well into the night but not before the moon rose; we had no very clearcut idea where on heaven or earth we were until morning, and then we were too rushed to look. Anyway after much cursing and swearing and a deplorable dearth of seamanship, we set up the tent (right on an invisible patch of tar), jimmied together those damned cots, stowed away bits and pieces of gear, tried to adjust car screens in the pitch dark for the first time, wandered feverishly thru the woods in search of water and evacuation holes (finding both close together of course), settled ourselves once more in the sticky oil of our own sweat, under a veritable blanket of cicada

and katydid noises, and attempted sleep. At about 3AM the skies opened and Babs reached frantically around protecting things while I lay in miserable ineptitude, caring not what. At least the water relieved the legions of ever-clanging insects around us, who sounded all night as if they were preparing, against the proper moment, some horrible descent upon mankind. Certainly, as I lay there listening to what I imagined to be the grinding together of a million mandibles, I had a vision of purpose. I could see us being torn apart by hordes of frantic insects, we and every other living thing, once they got the signal. I feared I should never again be able to think of crickets and the like as romantic troubadours. And the weather changed suddenly with that rain. It took courage at sunup to lave even the upper part of the body with pump water. What am I saying? It took courage to brush one's teeth. I did it, tho. *(For me, this was a hilarious and revealing description of how Eric really felt about this adventure in which I was so invested. For it was my idea to camp, and I loved even the unexpected hardships as challenges to my skills in fending with new circumstances.)*

This was the morning on which Heath contracted a cold which has been a general plague ever since - not only to her. We date this as the morning of her 'discontent'. It has been with us henceforth - stomach, chest, throat, legs, nose, eyes, what not. She stands about all wrapped up in herself and here 'sufferings'. I doubt whether she has seen anything not called to her attention in the last 36 hours.

Aug 7

This was the day of the long haul. Having gone 300 miles on Saturday, with two long stops in Salem and Hannibal, this day we planned to consume 390 miles of prairie. We broke camp swiftly and were on the road by 8AM.

I wish I could adequately describe the sense of changing topography we surveyed on Sunday and Monday, on this 2-day sweep of the Great Plain to the Denver foothills of the Rockies. We rolled on down Rte 36, and up the mid-west slope to the Continental Divide, leaving behind the corn lands of eastern Kansas, the crops growing shorter as we went west, coming gradually up on wheat farms and ranches. I am not enough of a farmer to know what stage what wheat was - summer, winter, or whatever else there is. But clearly we were late for harvest. The ranches became ever more ranch-like and the towns more and more like something out of a modern western. Spruce, well-washed towns laid out with wide streets with less well-spaced but well cared-for houses. Sweeping verandas. Unfinished log out-houses. Trees planted in rows everywhere. At the breakfast counter, men with fairly cut beards dined diligently or idly from boxes provided by the house. Lots of farm boots, pinned-up slouch hats and dungarees. No loud shirts, tho, that was a work-a-day item of apparel. The men were delightful, tight-lipped, saw-boned and tough. The women waitresses either easy-going, ample matrons or hard-the shape of the hills was longer - each meadow a more spacious waste, more and more barbed wire and sage brush-faced dames. And as we left civilization nothing grew more primitive, just everything rural grew vaster and on a larger scale. Nearing Last Chance I began to notice dead snakes among the raccoons and rabbits on the road - large ones. And being phobic about snakes I walked rather gingerly around the car in the hot sands, whenever we stepped out in the middle of nowhere.

But to return to chronology. We ate breakfast on the outskirts of Joseph, where Jesse James got his and where the Pony Express started west. Then we pushed on, almost without intermission, to Oberlin and Sagga State Park where we were to spend the night. *(I can't find this park, either Eric got it wrong or it no longer exists. I can't find Oberlin Colorado either!)* This time, having been relentlessly purposive all day, we got in well before dark. And set up camp in the most mosquito-ridden area in Missouri. *(Don't think we were in Missouri)*. Babs claims that wind and a drop in temperature dispelled the plague before morning, but if so, it must have been JUST before, as I'm still scratching bumps I overlooked yesterday. Jenny was a mess, she even peed in her bed last night. A local blessing was an unfinished beach house on the Sagga Lake. Swimming was unthinkable, but Babs idly turned on a spigot at the house and got water! So we all took a shower. Then went into town and for \$4 got a steak breakfast for the 4 of us that the Palmer House wouldn't have provided for 3X that amount. We need soap, insect repellent, Kleenex etc. the kids are scarcely enjoying themselves, altho trying. It is time for all of us to settle down for a few days.

Aug 8

Only 250 miles today, from Oberlin to Denver, and there we can settle down for a few days. Again we fled across country, and again had the sense of doing, in some condensed version, what it took the pioneers months to do. How one yearns for the mountains. Not, however, that I would sell the prairie short.

On the contrary, Babs and I (Heath developed a 'tummy ache' today and was lost to civilized interests – Jenny is 3-year-old bored) fell in love with this endless land of sky. The ranches stand out like oases. Perhaps in the bottoms you see stunted clumps of trees that hardly get out of the ground before they start to branch - more like huge, gnarled bushes than trees. Otherwise, however, it is up to the ranchers to break the monotony (and yet the sublimity) of the range; and that they do by planting right around their houses anything they can import and cultivate. You see signs every 5 miles or so like '4 ½ miles to so-and-so's ranch – Herefords'. And it is obvious that the dirt track leads nowhere else. Herds dot the distant slopes, lone steers graze here and there. It is a desolation until you arrive within Denver's environs and your first sight of the Rockies. What sort of country is this? It is not true desert, it certainly is not wheat-waving prairie. But there are cacti and sagebrush and alfalfa, and occasional plantings of wheat and corn. It seems to be a kind of nether-nether zone.

Colorado has been experiencing an unusual amount of rain these days, and the immediate consequence was that we caught only fleeting and hazy glimpses of the mountains from points where fellow tourists tell us they breathe with awe. Last Chance is about 70 miles out and I understand that one can expect to focus on the mountains anywhere from there on to Denver. But I estimate we saw nothing on the horizon until we were about 30 miles from the city, and then had very little opportunity to distinguish definite peaks and ranges. Not that the day was grim, or even overcast, so the scene was impressive enough. Denver's long outskirts down highway 36-40 was gaudy with ranch houses, California modern, adobe, Spanish and gothic motels which gained character from the ever-larger hills looming at the distant end of the road.

Denver is a city of good taste, obvious energy and signs of a continuing tradition. We met the Diesings in one of the city parks, and while Paul and Babs went shopping for our evening meal - for mosquito smudge pots, for someone who could chastise Paul's recalcitrant gas stove - the kids and I wandered off in search of amusement. We did indeed find it. First, a large area of outdoor bowling alleys, horseshoe pits and tennis courts, on the latter of which teenagers were getting what looked to be first-class instruction in the noble game. Then a scenic children's railroad wandering thru this lovely park, swarming with ducks and geese. All of whom came waddling casually train-ward, in the hope of handouts, whenever the train arrived in the area. One old gander had it made. Somehow he had insinuated himself behind the station platform, where he begged cheekily in the much longer interval during which the train was stopped, and he got in his pitch first, while the passengers were yet uncloyed with the charm of mendicant geese. I blew our meager wad – 75 cents – here; they sold ices, Kool Kones they called them, in the station, and I felt sure this was the kind of eatable the children could appreciate. Perversely, they didn't. And so, when we wandered out of the RR park into a fascinating zoo, where there were pony and burro rides, we had to enter as window shoppers. There was an enormous playground with the biggest slide in it Jenny had ever seen. It even had a breath-taking bump in it and you slid like you were greased. Up went Jenny, nothing loath, behind Heath, and came down in utter consternation behind her. She got as far as the top on her 2nd trip and there stuck, in terror., and had to be rescued.

Babs had packed a deli supper and we soon started up into the hills to eat it, and to find a place where we could camp. Paul thought there might be camping at Red Rock Park so there we went. I guess



this was our first taste of grandeur. The red rocks themselves are fantastic foundations, and the huge amphitheater would outshine the most extravagant spectacle, even High Mass, that could be performed in it. There was no camping, however, and we were directed to Morrison, at the head of as scenic and verdant a canyon as we have seen yet, altho we didn't like the campground. We went on up the canyon to Idledale where there is a beautiful spot just outside of town, one of the Denver city parks. We were literally hemmed in by mountains, which formed more of a gorge than a canyon. And down this gorge "with ceaseless turmoil seething" (*a quote I cannot document*) rushed a good-sized and

obviously bursting stream, muddy and tumultuous. These geological facts were slated to have exciting implications later on. Up the stream from us about 100 yards deeper into the canyon, a long fallen log bridged the stream, as high as 10 ft off the water. On the other side was another picnic ground. The Diesings and ourselves were in sole possession of this paradise the first night.

Aug 9

Next day, however, it was decided that Babs, Jenny and the Diesings should take off on a tour while Heath and I stayed behind. And soon after they left and I had settled down to start this journal, hordes descended on the south side of Idledale. A caravan of 20 howling boys chaperoned by 3 matronly ladies were in the van. For an hour the campground rang with the screech of warhoops and the rumble of falling rock. It was actually hazardous for a time to walk thru the innermost recesses of the gorge. Then the Denver city sanitation department arrived by truck, as mean looking a bunch of city toughs as I have ever seen in Chicago, to make a pretense of policing the area. They went thru it in one desultory wave and were off again. Then more tenters and picnickers – and so on for the rest of our story.

Babs came back in the near afternoon full of the wonders of the Rockies and we planned to take a like trip next day. As I remember it, the afternoon, evening, and night passed without incident except for a tremendous rooking we took on fresh trout at a trout ranch down the road. A thoroughly inadequate dinner for the 6 of us, of eleven trout costing \$3.20.

Aug 10

Our family started off bright and early the next morning. We had a satisfactory breakfast in Golden, then meandered up Rte 6 to Echo Lake and on up to the top of Mt. Evans. A long, not particularly precipitous, but increasingly rough and inclement motor trip to certainly the highest point at which I have ever tried to breathe. (*It was reported to be the highest road in the U.S.*) Even Jenny felt the effects of that emaciated atmosphere. We saw no wildlife save marmots who kept popping inquisitively over the side of the road to investigate passing cars. We saw glassy ice everywhere and at Summit Lake what must have been one of the most desolate bodies of water in the world. And in this Beowolf-like tarn men fished! This trip consumed our day, we could work up very little interest in the rest of the trip. Little did I know how far off the opportunity to relax was.

(When we got to the top of Mt. Evans it was a bald landscape and the road stopped just short of a short walk over flat land to a tea-shop/gift-shop. At the beginning of the walk a large sign informed us of a list of things that could occur when we stepped out of the car. Yes, your knees will buckle; yes, you will be gasping; no, you wont die; no, you probably wont even fall down; yes, you will recover completely, just take it slowly, etc. all correct.)

Back at camp we toasted hot dogs. Just before this entry the Denver City Police force arrived, in the person of a beefy, cigar-munching representative who announced – tho very pleasantly – that we were off limits and must break camp. Camping was not allowed at Denver city parks and someone had complained. At Ellie's plea he allowed us til morning to depart, and like fools we were grateful. In the midst of dinner a charming and most amazingly efficient lady from Vermont arrived with her daughters, looking for a campsite. We told them our story and she agreed to join us in violating the law, on the ground that she wanted to attend a Red Rocks concert that night with William Primrose as soloist. I have never seen more spectacularly organized gear. While Heath and I crossed the log bridge and ascended to the peak of the 1st ridge – maybe 45 minutes – they raised camp, ate, and were off, taking Paul and Ellie with them.

All evening, indeed for several days, rain had threatened. This evening, however, the threat became a reality. Babs and I got the kids to bed early, in the tent, then ourselves settled down in the car, utterly exhausted. The rain started at just that moment, got worse and so did the accompanying thunder and lightning. I was made instantly aware of the necessity of joining the kids in the tent. I just made it before the heavens opened like a water faucet. The tent ceiling buckled with the force of the downpour. The tent flap was powerless to keep out the rain, which soon became a small but waxing lake at the end of the tent. So while the children slept peacefully, I, partly out of need and partly to take my mind off the arsenal of thunder and lightning right upon us, got down on my hands and knees with a washcloth and started to sponge up the water into a can. I guess I was down there for ½ hour making a spectacle I am glad no one could see – I guessed the rain fell, in a merciless torrent, for 45 minutes. Gradually it died away, tho, to be sure, not the rush of water in the stream outside, noisy enough to drown out the sound of traffic on the road about 10 ft above us. Just as I emerged from the tent the Diesings arrived. They had had a hairy trip home on that winding canyon road washed out in dozens of places, littered with debris from the walls above, just before the road closed for the night. As Paul emerged from the car we both became aware of the stream - that it occupied about twice as much channel as it had before the storm. We looked down to see the Diesing's tent go six inches under water. Their stove was some 20 ft down the bank and the whole bank was momentarily under water. Without knowing it, we had seen a flood crest arrive and pass, and it had left

the Diesings with considerable problems. We, luckily, were on higher ground.

There was no making the best of the Diesing tent, not that night. So we salvaged one of their cots, put it in our tent and Paul bedded down, while Ellie took the car. I was just about to slip between the covers once more when two pairs of headlights came down the trail. They turned out to be cottagers from the area just below us who told some incoherent story about high water being expected, a dam breaking or something. In any event they had somehow been alerted to abandon their cabins. While we were discussing this, into the canyon roared an obviously official car, siren going, red light blinking. From the PA system came "Get out of here right now, high water coming".

That did it. All this while the girls slept. I tore into the tent, knocking over Paul's bed, grabbed Jenny and rushed her out to the car. Then went back for Heath. I thought I had waked her by dint of bodily hauling her out of the bed clothes and setting her on her feet – with one hand. But she tried to go out thru the back of the tent. I tried again and this time she made the door. But when I emerged, trying to carry the foot locker, tent bag and I think a bed in one hand, she was wandering dreamily down toward the stream. I corrected that, vociferously, and somehow we joined the cottagers up on the road. (*where was "Babs" in all this activity?? why no mention of her???*).

Soon a local man who introduced himself as Mr. Dex, the same whose siren had screamed into the canyon, tore up the trail and announced that he had the rest of our gear. If we followed it up to his home we could sort it out. Off we went, the Diesings necessarily in hot pursuit, arriving at a delightful ranch house on top of a hill. Here Mr. Dex rushed off again, and Mrs. Dex, a large and frowsy young matron with what I think were 6 children of ages up to 12, entertained us with coffee and garrulous stories about the local bears, bobcats, mountain lions, eagles and finally a presumed Black Widow spider which recently had all but done in her youngest, a bouncing two-year old of at least a stone. Thru all this, Heath and Jenny slept soundly in the car where they had been deposited. Out on the road all sorts of noises roared by. But none of them the anticipated wave of water. Rather, this was the frantic activity of the local volunteer constabulary who, 17 years before, had seen a race of water rushing down the glen. Their fears were our inconveniences that night, I know now that the water I had seen was that wall, for what it was worth. But then I held no grudges for next day eventually we drove 10 miles up the canyon to where an impressive rural dam held back the water. Had it failed, it seems to me we would have been washed as high as Pike's Peak. Or worse.

We slept that night in the Dex garage. I remember rising soon after settling to move my cot from under a steady drip descending from the roof, a final token of my intestinal fortitude. Next day we rose to the task of sorting and repossessing our equipment. For Paul this was all good fortune, for Mr. Dex had a hose and sun-baked hills on which the tent could be raised, washed, and dried. It certainly needed it. Our tent was ripped slightly in the process of being hauled around in the dark. Otherwise we found everything but some loose food, which probably was somewhere near New Orleans by now. Paul's stove, I should point out, with which he had had endless difficulties, never worked better than after emerging from its mud bath. The Holdens soon I arrived, in unflinching good humor, to order themselves with the same awesome efficiency and to tell us about their adventures cross country. All of us were off by 10 with many blessings to the Dexes.

Aug 11

We decided not to visit with the Ruckers (another U of C Phil. Grad student) in Colorado Springs and instead headed for Mesa Verde. The distance however, called for a 2-day trip, so the first night we stopped at Garfield, in the San Isabel National Forest. On this day we ran into our first notable difficulty with Paul and Ellie. I had arranged with Paul to arrive, and thereafter eat. However, on the road it became advisable to stop for dinner before going to our rendezvous. The result was that the Diesings got ahead of us without seeing our car parked at the cafe, spent a futile hour trying to locate us, and were thoroughly piqued.



The high spot of the day was the trip up from Silverton thru Ouray to the top of the pass, scenically the greatest marvel we have yet seen. The whole rise to about 14,000 ft proceeds by a series of turns. You go on up thru one canyon to what seems like the top, only to arrive at another valley rising beyond still

higher. The most hair-raising drive of the trip was on the so-called Million Dollar Highway half way from Silverton to Ouray. At some places due to the fallings away of the rock, there is scarcely room for 2 cars to pass and the descent into the chasm is breath-taking. Ouray is the most hemmed-in-by-mountains town I have ever seen. Enormous hills literally rise from its outskirts. The effect of the diverse mounds with their celebrated colors is staggering. Then way up at the top of the pass are two gold mountains, and peaks of reddish gold.

Aug13



(A 3-day stay at Mesa Verde was our introduction to the National Park system and both Eric and I wrote about it, but not very interestingly. I am realizing that this narrative will be overlong unless I do some cutting so I will continue with just highlights. We very much enjoyed the park and loved climbing around the cliff houses. There was a campfire one night where 6 Navajo rangers danced and sang. Eric's account



of this event does not include one of my most vivid memories for the whole trip. Jenny watched in fascination as the Navajos performed and when they were done she popped out into the aisle of the amphitheater and did her own impersonation of their whooping and stomping, to the delight of her astonished parents and the audience. We all loved Mesa Verde, it was a great introduction to the National Park system and its great campgrounds, guided hikes, campfires, and lectures about the flora, fauna, geology and anything else of interest in that particular region. Here is Jenny with her treasured popsicle and Heath looking recovered from her annoying illnesses.)

Aug 15

We got an early start and raced cross the Ute Reservation south of Mesa Verde towards Grand Canyon. Here we got our first taste of real a butte and table top land - and of Indians in a setting still as primitive as the Syrian. Shepherd girls, trailed by many dogs, watched small bunches of sheep in a barren wilderness dotted by spires and whole castles of rock. We saw adobes, thatched lean-tos galvanized tin shacks – dwellings built of anything and everything – and each miles away from any other. Every now and then we drove into a veritable congregation of mostly women and children pursuing mysterious courses on some half-discernible track diagonally indifferent to the highway. But where they led to, or from where, or why there should be any traffic in that wilderness at all remained a mystery. *(Most of the wagon family traffic was ambling northward past us and I conjectured that we were seeing the Gallup Festival Indians winding their way homeward after the pow-wow, which formally ended the Saturday before.)* We, by dint of hard driving, finally crossed into New Mexico and arrived in Gallup in time for a very late breakfast. Indeed, Gallup was first human settlement of any consequence we saw all morning. And a rather shameful sight it was, a town of vast exploitation. The people who came to watch were being properly exploited; but clearly the Indians who came to perform were being even more thoroughly fleeced. The town teemed with gawking life being suckered. I learned later that the government had just allowed indians to purchase intoxicating liquors at will, and controversy raged about the success or failure of this policy. In any event the bars of Gallup, one to every third store front, were in land office bustle this August 15th at 11AM. Here we got the worst breakfast, for by no means the best price, it has ever been my misfortune to want, 4 hours after awakening. Altho I ate my eggs they were uneatable. When once, during the course of this purgatorial meal, the cook wandered, shanks laden, into the dining room, I almost gave up the struggle. We took to the open road with thanksgiving.

This was a day of hard driving. We roared into the Painted Desert and out again. We whirl-winded thru the Petrified Forest. We were impressed by both but couldn't linger. We arrived at Flagstaff well before sunset, shopped and started out of town on Rte 89, to a predestined campsite. All afternoon we had seen storm clouds massed over Humphrey Peak and sure enough the road led right toward this ominous mass. The campsite in question, not prepossessing under the best of circumstances, had been rained upon that afternoon, and looked it might be rained on intermittently all night. We dilly-dallied, going so far as to pay our 50 cent fee and untie our tarp. But a change of heart set in suddenly and we repacked, got a refund and set off on alternate 89 for Oak /C reek Canyon. And sure enough ran into a delightful campsite about 8 mi out of Flagstaff. The setting was delightful but a closer look revealed what was actually an exceedingly unkempt picnic ground, littered with bottles, tin cans, paper, etc. There were at least two other residents, though in the lonely night, far away from them, I felt doubt about their having stayed. And I must confess to remembering the evening best for one huge and drawn-out brawl between Babs and myself. What was that about? I can't remember. But it was a miserable fight in a far from pleasant evening. I couldn't find enough firewood to keep our campfire going for long. The bickering spoiled our deli supper. We went to bed early, unhappy, and I had my first worries on this trip about the dangers of being out in the open alone.

Aug 16

Spirits improved greatly on waking. Babs and I took a walk down to the center of the picnic ground before the kids arose, and flushed an Indian from his squatting sleep by an extinguished campfire. I soon gathered that he was acutely hung. Conversation consisted of his working his way up to the various requests he had to make – for a shot, beer, water, a ride to Oak Creek, a ride to Flagstaff, a couple of butts – the latter of which I gave him, and was glad to have him finally disappear up the road.

We took Rte 66 to Grand Canyon – a short 100 miles and got there early. Took a ride at once down to the rim to look into the gorge, were properly thunderstruck, then wandered thru the extensive canyon community to the teeming campground. We finally settled on a site, set up our gear, learned about showers, inspected the antique but incredibly well-maintained flush toilets, and then took the west rim drive, stopping faithfully at all the designated points. Somehow the Diesings found us without trouble (*I gather that we had arranged with them to drive separately for a day and meet at the canyon*). They had entered the park from the east, and we had come in from the south. We had left a message for them, and somehow they also found a message at the east gate, which puzzled us, but we didn't pay much attention. But as we headed back to camp from a a delicious and unbelievably reasonable dinner at the cafeteria, a familiar voice screamed "Babs" and it was Eileen Anderson (Andy) one of her best friends for Mt. Holyoke, who was there with her husband Bud (teaching at Cal. State San Jose) and two small daughters, camped not 20 yards from us! Hers was the message at the east gate, and it was for us. We had, of course, old home week for the next 45 min. They came over to our campfire that night and we stayed up later than we have on the whole trip.

We were rapidly disillusioned about an attempted descent into the canyon by burro. Even if our finances hadn't been perilous we wouldn't have done it for we learned that hardy souls hiked down the trail and felt superior to the lodge trade for it. Babs and Andy planned to descend next day; Bud, Paul and I talked loosely about having the experience the day after.

(Andy was a free spirit in college, such as I had never met, and she had a strong influence on my development into an independent woman. She did her own thing always and was a passionate liberal and idealist. Also great looking, and never seemed to care about how she looked or what kind of impression she made, and was thus a natural leader to the uncertain and groping undergrads like myself. I very much admired her, she gave me the courage to walk alone, a great gift. We met once again at Lompoc Beach where we had mothers-and-daughters camping weekend. But after that she disappeared from my life, and everyone else's, and no one seems to know where she went or why. Bud became a cause celebre in 1957 when he was dismissed from his Assistant Professorship at Auburn because he wrote an anti-segregation article for the school paper. He took his case to the AAUP but it fizzled out. He was a pioneer radical about 10 years ahead of his time. I can't find either of them by googling.)

Aug 17

I might have known that the intrepid Eileen would enter our tent near dawn, and off with my wife. That was the last we saw of them til around 5PM.

The kids and I visited the Observatory and worked hard on steeping ourselves - Heath and I did, that is - in the fascinating story of the great hole. The lecture, it was agreed, was the best so far. Then we took about a 2 mile walk along the cliff walk, identifying flowers and trees as we went, and collecting 'marbles', Jenny's persistent euphemism for bright colored pebbles. Relentlessly I went on the the Naturalist Workshop and worked my way thru their meager collection. I was beginning to distinguish ponderosa from pinyon pine and both from juniper; and I developed an interest in yuccas and century plants. The kids found a playground behind the workshop where I let them haul, pull, and push for an hour. And by this time I anticipated Babs' return.

But still no sign of her when we got back to camp. I cut some wood and the kids had a big moment when a deer came into camp, begging, and they fed him grapes out of their hands. Finally Babs showed, delivered by the Diesings, who had met her ¼ mi from the top of Bright Angel Trail. She was a proper wreck. And Andy had cracked her cookies on the way up. They had not, fortunately, descended into the inner gorge, but they had gone past Indian Gardens to the Tonto Plateau arm, a 12 mi hike altogether. It became obvious to Bud and me that we had to make the trip next day and descend to the Colorado, altho Paul was holding out strongly for Oak Creek Canyon. Babs got her second wind that evening when some neighboring psychologists came over to break breeze with Paul. We stayed up late again.

(Andy and I had a memorable trek down into the canyon. We were both greenhorns and unequipped for what we had to endure, but were also young and hardy and we managed, altho I had never been so challenged on a hike. The way down was wondrous, and at Indian Gardens we were tempted to go to the bottom. But reason prevailed, and also the knowledge that if you had to be rescued by rangers with mules it cost \$15, about a week's budget in those days. The 1500' haul back up the trail in the heat of the August afternoon was the hardest physical accomplishment of my 32 years, one switchback after another, on and on and on. And that is what I remember most about the hike. That and wondering how people came back up for the total descent of 3000'.)

Aug 18

We started off bright and early, variously using the girls' experience. I had on shorts and Heath's sun hat but no food. One cigarette. The other two skipped the hats but had fruit in their pockets. The day was magnificent and the descent exciting and easy. Down we went past numerous layers of geological time, 160,000,000 years went along beside us. We were all alone until we got to the Indian Gardens, where a group of college huskies dashed by us. I was reminded of the Austrian mountain nymph the girls had seen flitting gaily by them yesterday, pausing a moment to warble on her recorder.

Indian Gardens is a spectacular grove of giant cottonwoods presided over by a very fortunate park employee with whom we passed the time of day. Bud and I were all for going down, but Paul was all for returning. On the advice of the local resident we compromised on Platform Point. On our way out to the rim I found an apple tree which solved my lunch problem. The meandering 1 ½ mile trail was the high point of the canyon experience for me. Here one gets a sense both of the vastness of the canyon and of its heights, depths and unconquerable desolation. One can imagine how the trappers who first saw this from the rushing muddy river called it the 'horrid gorge'. And yet it is grand, and awesome. Lizards scampered away as we trudged on. We had left the ever-circling goshawks and falcons (*sic*) of the cliffs far behind. The pyramids and temples of the platform loomed all around us, and the colors of the various layers were like a sharply etched rainbow. At the end of the trail we looked down another staggering 1500' upon the river, the tool that forged this wonder, and indeed got a sense of how that could be.

Back at Indian Gardens we cooled our feet in the deliciously clear brook that bubbles there, watching butterflies play and bees of various colors and sizes busily work. I jumped for apples and began to develop a taste for cactus pears, altho in my first encounter with one I got spines in my tongue, trying to bite them out of my fingers. While waiting to gather momentum for the cliff assault we chatted with a nature-boy-attired youth who told us about his cockeyed trip from NY to LA. I remember him saying he intended to collect snakes when he got to the desert - that he would have no fuel problems because cactus burned with an exceptionally hot flame.

I remember that Bud and I were very grim about the ascent, which we took with various breathing exercises. Paul was light-hearted but ultimately fell far behind. We made it much more easily than I had expected and beat the girls' time by an hour. On top we went into the cafeteria for what Paul called a ceremonial bottle of beer. I'm sure Babs was annoyed no end by finding me chopping wood, when she – who had gone to meet us – came back to camp. But I felt no pain.

We had another, final campfire with the Hutchinsons that evening and felt our wonderful trip drawing to a close.

Aug 19

This is the day – and all night - we went all the way to California, altho not quite to the Pacific. Oak Creek Canyon was indeed beautiful and I admit the changes were fabulous – from high timberland to veritable desert. Towards the middle of the passage down the canyon the foliage was as rich and varied as New England's; except for stark red tables and spires of rock in the distance you could imagine yourself somewhere in the Berkshires. The road follows a crystal clear brook (*so eastern, we soon learned to call them creeks*) of considerable proportions profuse with boulders, and we stopped once to leap among the stepping stones. We had split up for the day and were to meet Paul and Ellie at Granite Rocks Lakes just north of Prescott. We caught up with them just before the ghost town of Jerome, where Paul's green Studebaker was laboring mightily up the steep hills. I had little confidence in the ability of that car to take a bad hill, and past Jerome the road really climbed a high pass. In any event Paul pulled over just before Jerome to let his car cool and we went in to town to look around. Jerome has the reputation of being the newest ghost town in the US, having plummeted from a population of 15,000 to 100 in 1953 when Dodge-Phelps ceased operation in the local copper mines. The town was sustained by sourdoughs, tourists and artists, the latter of whom could rent 10 room studios for \$20/month. And here, incongruously, I found the choicest collection of modern craft artifacts I have ever seen outside of the Mesa Verde gift shop.

Among other things we learned that the earliest coke used in furnaces in the area back in the 2nd half of the last century came by boat around the Horn from Wales. Someone had dug up the remains of what must have been a pre-deluvian blast furnace. A couple of tobacco-stained and asthmatic prospectors were making a living renting their burros and Conestoga wagons to tourists for shots of the kids. The town was expansively planned with large brick company buildings, schools, offices – all now otally dead. From above you could see the roofs stripped off many, as the company prepared to carry off useful building materials. Near here, we heard, was the home of Ambassador Douglas, whose family owns the 2ndary mine in the area.

Prescott was in flood when we arrived just after the storm. But a good service station man greased my car notwithstanding. We ate and shopped in town, a tight-knit but prosperous little community not given up to tourists. Finally we met the Diesings on the other side of town and decided to run on to Blythe at the California border, where we expected to arrive by 9PM. As I remember it there was one more pass, a not too high one to cross, before we descended like magic into the desert. This was another of those remarkable transigrations of zone to which we had been subject since Denver. One moment you are on a cool high hill, the next, after a sharp descent, you are in fetid heat surrounded by sagebrush, organ pipe cactus and Joshua Trees. (*He certainly had much to learn about desert flora.*) Within 5 minutes we knew why we were taking this road in the dark of night. We could perceive the heat grow constantly to Blythe and on to Indio. But Babs and I agreed that the sunset was the most spectacular we had ever seen. It held possession, not only of the west, but of the entire sky, which here is $\frac{3}{4}$ of everything there is here. All around us, at great distances, storms raged, adding fabulously to the range of colors and the multiplicity of planes. Here was the painted desert indeed, endlessly blending and altering its unbelievable profusion of shades and distribution of cloud masses.

I forgot to mention that Babs spent most of the day fighting nausea – evidently a virus passed on from Heath, who had a day of upheaval in Grand Canyon while I was down in the gorge. The traffic on this road stunned me, it might have been the port of Boston. There was no moon, we could soon see nothing but the streams of headlights, visible for miles, and weird flashings from the hills on our right, nothing like lightning and still unexplained. The kids settled down to fitful sleep, Babs dozed fretfully. I raced along to Blythe, where we arrived at the California inspection point at 9:30. This was the most dramatic moment of the wild night. The long chains of cars in an atmosphere that hummed, cars coming and going – and most weirdly - a veritable biblical plague of crickets that lay in a messy carpet on everything. Our car picked up a dozen we never fully lost until several days later. (*They were tucked in shoes, in blankets, in food boxes.*)

On to Indio with its date groves, barely discernible thru the night and all the more exotic for it. And finally up into the San Bernardino Mountains and a blessed coolness. We decided to stop, and drew into a campsite at the top and all bedded down in the car.

Aug 20

Excitement got us up early next morning and we hastened on for our first view of the verdant coastal plain and the sea. You can imagine the enthusiasm with which we greeted the first town, with its strange species of palms and gorgeous, exotic bushes and trees; its orange, lemon, lime, avocado and peach groves, its cottage and ranch house and villa architecture. We drove thru the dead town of the 30s at Lake Elsinore, with its parched bottom. *(Then up into yet another range and over it to the actual coastal plain, terminating at Doheny Beach State Park in San Juan Capistrano. I remember vividly standing and gazing at the ocean when a pair of abalone hunters with spears rose from the water and flapped onto the beach with their catch. Jenny headed immediately for the ocean and altho we had no beach toys with us, she found games to play with everything she could get her hands on. We found a restaurant that served abalone the next night and it was soooo delicious. Far too soon, abalone was a treat of the past, weren't we lucky? The accompanying photo of Jenny on her first encounter with the*

Pacific Ocean tells it all: We were HERE and we were staying.)

