

New Mexico - From Whale Gulch to Chez Robert in Santa Fe, NM

Paul Carlson
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Camel Rock, Tesuque Pueblo, New Mexico

A new phase entered my life quite suddenly, at least in an external sense, however my life quest continued, beyond what I could experience in isolated Whale Gulch.

One friend-of-friend who'd stayed with us was a young lady named Terry D. We hadn't met her boyfriend, Greg M, a Hispanic man who worked as a uranium miner, however they lived together in New Mexico.

Out of the blue a letter arrived, in which she thanked us for our hospitality, and invited us to come visit them in Albuquerque. This would've been in early December. My response was immediate, a strong desire to do this. Also, the son of my Uncle Clarence of Sioux Falls lived there, practicing as a veterinarian. I wanted to visit him also.

A more responsible person, an older version of me, would've notified people (despite having no phones, and the internet not yet existing), and made certain that things would go smoothly for the Big House and goats and everything. In the event, I simply told the folks staying there that I planned to visit friends in Albuquerque, and would be leaving shortly. They expressed surprise, and how could I blame them? Still, I was determined, and never looked back.

Later I learned that things do go all right, and that eventually Doug O regained ownership of the property. I hadn't dealt with the finances at all, however assume that mom ceased making payments at some point.

I gathered my very few belongings, and some (keepsakes especially) ended up at my grandparent's and at Eric's homes. They would hold on to the stuff, through fifteen tumultuous years, until I had a stable residence to store things myself.

I left behind the Tinkertoys and telescope, also the little stove and various fixtures. Later I heard that another young man moved in there. I never heard his name, but later he brought away whatever was useful. Which is good, and I'm glad someone made use of the place. Eventually, left unattended, the plastic side-wall sheets tattered, the soft oak and alder poles went rotten, and at some point the place literally collapsed. There is no picture of the cabin, since none of us had a camera back then, however in 1991 I took a photo of the ruins.

My memory is fuzzy, as to the beginning of my journey. I headed to either Sheldon's or my grandmother's house, where (within limits) I'd always been welcome. Back then, some of the local radio stations maintained Ride Boards, a very handy arrangement for travelers. Instead of hitchhiking, or picking up random strangers, folks simply posted where they were driving, or seeking a ride to.

I quickly found a businessman, a middle aged guy from the South, who was driving that way, and was happy to bring me as far as Albuquerque. I'd pitch in for gas money, though I still didn't have a driver's license, and could not help in that department.

How could I pay? Mom would give me some cash, and also, we'd gone beyond USDA Commodities food to those newfangled Food Stamps. Back then, actual coupons you'd tear out of a booklet. I don't remember, if I ever knew, who exactly was the official recipient, but I ended up with some. Back then, Food Stamps quickly become an alternative for cash, and no grocery store ever asked about such things. A pocket full of those came in quite handy.

Off we drove, chatting about mutual interests, and of course, I helped the driver stay awake. When we got about halfway, it came up that I hadn't actually told Terry that I was coming. Part this was youthful naivete, part confidence in a larger hand of fate, and partly just because it was a big adventure.

It seemed obvious when stated, like what if they were out of town, or were in the midst of some big problem? Anyhow, in that era of pay phones I did get hold of Greg and Terry, yes they were at home, and though a big surprise, yes I could stay with them.

The next day I arrived, to a humble one bedroom apartment. This was a one story house, which, I think, had been divided unto rental units. I'd never been to New Mexico, and loved it immediately.

I bought a few small items, such as a Pueblo style necklace made by a local woman, which as she suggested, I wanted to (someday) give to my soulmate. Unfortunately it got misplaced, at some point, though my friend Eric did loyally hold on to my Marklin train set, for those upcoming 15 long years.



ZomeWorks Solar Tracker

Near Terry's house was a place I'd read about, famous in counterculture circles, known as Zome Works. They worked on solar energy devices, and other handy items, for small scale usage. They invented, and improved upon, a wide range of items. I would walk over there, and just watch, a welcome observer (though not a direct participant) for hours at a time. #@\$*

One day Terry drove me over to see my cousin the veterinarian. I did get to meet him, at his facility, but it was a busy day for him, and all we could do was say hello. As a conservative business type, I'm sure he wasn't exactly thrilled to have scruffy pony-tailed kid show up, anyhow.

She also took me to the base of the majestic Sandia Crest, which overlooks the city, and I eagerly hiked up to the summit. It was a quiet

day, and I watched the aerial tram in operation. As a tram car was departing, one kid, presumably a staffer, jumped down onto its roof, and rode it down the mountain that way.

As a child I'd written one short story, which I still have. The experience at Sandia Crest inspired me to write another. Alas, and unfortunately, in a semi-puritanical mood I later threw that story away.

Being December, they wanted a genuine Christmas tree. We drove southwest, up into snowy mountains. (Probably the San Mateo mountains, in the Cibola National Forest.) They found a great tree, not large, but a good fit for their place.

I was being my usual oblivious self, not household doing chores or whatnot. (Not that a huge amount needed to be done.) I figured I'd need some cash. My one travel policy was to, if possible, have enough cash for a Greyhound bus ticket, should I fail to catch a ride somewhere. So I'd tag along to the local grocery store, and readily convert \$20 Food Stamp coupons into regular cash.

Within about five days, Greg reminded me that my welcome would not extend indefinitely. As he put it, "my own brother" wouldn't be allowed to hang out with them forever. I did not argue, but began arranging to get back to the Bay Area. (Not to Whitethorn.)

I think it was the UNM college radio station that ran a local ride board. They played music upon request, and I'd asked for a favorite, Morning Morgantown by Joni Mitchell. Now I put in for a ride to San Francisco.

Within a day or two, someone responded, offering a ride to Los Angeles. Greg said, take it. Who was I to argue? Anyhow, I was "going with the flow" and assumed it would be for the best.

One complication. The young man who offered the ride, was already heading for another rendezvous, and asked if I could meet in there. In for a penny, in for a pound, so I agreed. And got myself away from my reluctant hosts.

I headed for a place called Camel Rock, on the outskirts of Santa Fe, well to the north of Albuquerque. He was looking for another person, at a meeting of some sort, held at a restaurant opening there.

In the event, I started out, got onto a certain highway, then realized it was the wrong road, headed too far west. Fortunately, rides came quickly and each was for a good distance. I got back onto the proper route, and my luck held.



My ride into Santa Fe knew of Camel Rock, and brought me right there. I found the place, an adobe style building called Chez Robert. Sure enough, I found the guy, and hit it off well.

Then came a surprise. The good kind. Robert turned out to be an older man, from France, and he was indeed opening a nice restaurant there. He was also a spiritualist, and did channeling. The opening ceremony dispensed with ribbon cutting and all that, rather Robert was joined by two elders from the Santa Clara Pueblo. Perhaps twenty or thirty people comprised an audience, mostly young seekers such as myself.

They wished to invoke the blessing of a personage they called the Earth Mother, nature personified and more. As contrasted with (France being mostly Catholic) Mother Mary, who was the Sky Mother. I

could be mis-stating this a bit, I had no pen and paper and it was (as I write this) 48 years ago. But that's the essence of things.

The native elders spoke in welcome, and did a brief ceremony. Then Robert offered to channel the mother spirit(s), and answer any questions. Unlike my tongue-tied experience with Arthur C Clarke, I did speak up. I asked a simple, broad question about spiritual life, and received a clear direct answer. Alas I cannot recall the details, however (despite my longtime skepticism) I was deeply impressed.

My confidence in the existence of God, and of a direct purposeful Divine presence in my life, was tremendously reinforced.

Little did I know, but I would be back to Chez Robert two years later, having embarked on a whole new adventure.