

CIBOLA SUMMER OF 1962

The Cibola summer of 1962 was extraordinary—so much happened, although at the time, it seemed like we were stuck in a ghastly purgatory of endless highways, half constructed ski lodges, empty state, parks, small villages in the Rocky Mountains and dingy motels. The Girl Scouts of America had paid up the delinquent mortgage on our beloved Cibola ranch and occupied it. As they say, “Possession is 9/10 of the law” The GSA was in, and we were very much out. As the days stretched into weeks, it seemed we would never get there. Finally in late July, after a bitter court case, the Orrs were able to collect enough alms, donations and loans to pay the mortgage man. The Girl Scout usurpers finally were ousted, and we entered in triumph. There was also much dissention within the group during that memorable summer. For those two and a half months I kept a regular diary—for one of the few times in my life. Ran across it a few weeks ago, and the memories came flooding back. It occurred to me that visitors to the Hawthorne/ Cibola website might also be interested in revisiting that ancient time—now almost 50 years past.

Here are the subjective highlights from my diary, letters home and recollections. Sadly much of it was taken up with boring romantic angst, and adolescent insecurities, which I have mercifully omitted. Sorry that the names are so sparse. I mainly used initials, and my memory of who exactly they were has faded. There were a few days when we just sat around rested. I have left those days almost blank. Direct quotes from the diary and letters are in quotation marks.

Please feel free to send comments to: [address listed in Hawthorne directory]

June 26, 1962, Arlington, Virginia to Cleveland, cool and sunny

The first day of Caravan. Many new faces and lots of old friends. Peggy Diggs, Molly Warner, the two Winters, the Orrs, Dave Roth, Owen Quigley, Sally Nash, Laura, Alice, Indy and many others. Made two valuable new friends, that first day--Connie Curtis and Larry Lane. We set off in two old school buses accompanied by a fleet of cars/trucks. As usual, there seemed to be endless delays due to mechanical problems with the buses-four breakdowns in all. I related frantically moving from seat to seat on the slow moving bus like a busy bee. Completely beat when we arrived after dark. "Really had a great time."

June 27, Cleveland to Lakeside, Michigan, nice and cool

"Rode with Eorr and with her alone one can do nutty things". We broke down on the Ohio Turnpike for ten hours with a faulty fuel pump. It was glaringly bright with cars whizzing by in the midday sun. Eleanor suggested we try table tapping to pass the time. Hands were laid on the table, and she solemnly called upon the table to speak. Until then I had been a skeptic about the paranormal, but as the table legs rose off the ground and floated there was no denying something unusual was happening. I carefully examined the many hands to see if someone was cheating, but could see nothing amiss. Very eerie, and still a vivid memory. Some claimed it was crudely faked, but it looked very real to me. That night we had a wonderful folk singing session with Larry Lane, Eddy Tricket, Bill Winter and many others. "WOW In 5 days we will be in New Mexico!!"

June 28,29,30, July 1-- Lakeside, Michigan to Iowa to South Dakota, hot and humid,

Lots of mosquitoes and mechanical problems. There were several all night marathon drives with sing alongs. Valeree, valeraa valerahahahah “Pulled in at daybreak and no sleeping bags. Would give anything for a good nights sleep’

July 2 South Dakota to North Platte, Nebraska, hot

Another typical day on the caravan, but “around 6:30 in the evening our bus hit a soft shoulder and rolled three quarters of a turn. Thank God no one injured badly. Nora and Larry Lane had minor injuries. I will never forget Nora’s face or my strong reaction as the world I knew became topsy-turvy. We all went to the hospital for a checkup, and then spent the night at the North Platte firehouse on cots. I slept a whole 8 hours.” As I recall, we had decided to open the door to the bus for cooling, and Nora was sitting in the stairwell. Just before the roll-over she moved to a nearby seat. Poor Alan Winslow was the driver, and he was sick about the accident. It wasn’t his fault. The Nebraska landscape was flat and featureless, and we were only going about 45. But the ancient bus was worn out, and a real job to keep on the road. The almost invisible soft shoulder was just too much. It was a very close thing. The bus was on its side and Eleanor was frantic as Doug and Leslie were asleep in the back and buried under our duffle bags and gear. The smell of leaking gasoline hung heavily over the area. I still go through major post-traumatic stress syndrome when motor vehicles start to tip. We were instructed to keep quiet about the accident until we reached the ranch—supposedly just a few days away.

July 3 Cody Park, North Platte, Nebraska, hot and sticky

The people of North Platte really put themselves out for us. They helped us unload our duffle bags from the wreck, gave us food from the Quaker Oats plant in Omaha, (Life cereal which I still eat with nostalgia today) and transported us to nearby Cody Park while we started our search for a new set of wheels. “Got to sleep at 3 am--Should of have been in Cibola today.”

July 4,5,and 6 Cody Park, Nebraska hot as hell, sticky

Spent a lot of time waiting for a new bus, swimming in the tiny Platte River, and reliving the accident with Gary Simons and Bob Schultheis. “My feelings were mixed. I didn’t believe it should have been done in the first place”. Went into town with Peg W and hung out with no money “excellent discussion on sex, boys and certain people”. The three-day wait in the middle of North Platte was pretty tedious, but “a real relationship developed between one and all, and by the end we were all bosom buddies.” For some reason several of us were selected to accompany Eleanor who was negotiating to sell the wrecked bus to a half dozen very drunken locals. She flirted outrageously with them vying for a higher price, swilling beer and sitting on their laps. It was a side of Eleanor we had never imagined. “Our small group had to fight like hell to preserve Eorrs’ chastity.” When the offer hit \$350 she accepted, and we beat a hasty retreat back to Cody Park.

July 7,8 Cody Park, Swanson Lake, Nebraska to Georgetown, Colorado, hot in

Nebraska, cold in the mountains.

“Reached Swanson Lake and was welcomed by all”. We were together again for the first time since the accident. Next morning “woke up to Dick Roth. He and Ann Pike are getting married?!”. We loaded up and started the long pull to Georgetown in the Rockies. Drove through Denver and stopped at the art museum for a bit of culture.

“Reached Georgetown and went to the old saloon for many cokes. I have no money. Dante in a very black mood. Then learned the bad news. Cibola, mortgage etc. Girl Scouts have moved in. Orrs need \$50,000, but think we can do it. “ This was the first hint that things were about to get really complicated.

July 9,10,11 Georgetown and Silver Plume, Colorado, cool

We just sat around bored as hell waiting for a new engine for the bus, and news from New Mexico. “Food scant, poor and monotonous.” All spare cash had been collected for emergency funds. The devil makes work for idle hands. Somebody(s) broke into an attic in Silver Plume and stole a bunch of stuff. I remember a sword, an antique medical kit, a collection of ancient nickels and a Nazi flag, which they displayed prominently. The Orrs, who reminded us all of what Nazism really stood for, soon confiscated it. I’m ashamed to say that some of this stuff ended up in my hands later in the summer. “ Laura Sereno, Diane Rengers, verses Bob Schultheis and Fletch (?) in some very horny dancing. WOW! Shake it up baby, twist and shout!!”

July 12-16 Breckinridge Ski Lodge, Colorado, cool

Went to the Breckinridge Player's melodrama to see 'Brother Against Brother'. It got boring after the third night. Climbed mountains in the snow and rode the ski lift. Hung out in the half finished ski lodge listening to Gary Simons playing Beethoven's 5th at full blast. Later that evening I took my first stab at creative writing. Eleanor suggested we write about a meaningful event of the summer—I choose Eleanor's award winning performance hawking the wrecked bus to the North Platte drunks.

July 17-20 Great Sand Dunes, Colorado, hot

"Eorr says we get to Cibola tomorrow and our money problems are licked!" Climbed the fabulous dunes, which were mountainous and constantly shifting. Took lots of photos (sadly, most now lost) At 10:15pm on the 19th Sandy showed up and we drove all night to a motel in beautiful Embudo New Mexico. "Probably will never reach Cibola, Shit on a goddam stick". In a letter home I wrote, "This trip is cursed".

July 20-27 Embudo. New Mexico, hot

"At last on the 20th with no washing we pulled into New Mexico where we washed. We are now camped at a small motel for God knows how long. Just received your letter a half hour ago. PS Please write soon--no immediately." Without doubt the longest week of the entire summer, or maybe any summer for that matter. Everyone was sick, exhausted. loosing hope and out of sorts. Everyday we were told that we "almost had the money to get to Cibola" (only \$2000 from our goal!), but nothing ever seemed to happen. Looks like the GSA will hold on to the ranch all summer. Some, like Nora,

elected to desert and return home.

On the July 24th , Sandy wrote this mortified letter to parents offering a refund and return trip for any unhappy kid.

“Dear Parents:

I must start this letter by expressing my deepest regrets concerning what has happened at Cibola and your children. This summer has been the most exasperating, frustrating experience of our lives and nothing could be more embarrassing. The series of events that took place on the caravan were, of course, extraordinary.... The worst blow of all, however, (and for this I assume full responsibility) is the fact that we could not get possession of Cibola due to a legal tangle I found myself in just after the caravan left. Briefly, it goes like this. Last winter Cibola was foreclosed because of a mortgage violation and we lost the property. This past spring I arranged to redeem the property and wasn't informed until late June that the party who proposed to do so could not, because of tremendous losses on the market. To further complicate matters the girl scouts who had bought the property subject to our redemption right, moved on to it making it necessary upon redemption to evict them. It wasn't until yesterday that we were able to raise sufficient funds in case (approximately \$52,000) and redeem our property. It is now ours again after a long, hard, somewhat bitter and very humiliating experience.... For 8 years we have run Cibola without a mishap and virtually without a discontented child or family. This summer has been a nightmare for Eleanor and me. Again I apologize.”

Other than horseback riding and swimming in the microscopic Rio Grande not much to do in those scrubby hills near the highway. Took a brief trip down to the Santa Domingo Pueblo. “It was great to see the Cate’s again.” On the 25 and 26 we attended court in Taos. There was much arguing about compensation for the “improvements” the GSA had made to the ranch during their brief tenure. For example, they wanted \$200 for several hand-decorated “no trespassing” signs. There was a long and boring discourse while we glared daggers at the scouts and their lawyer. But to everyone’s surprise, the next day the judge told the combatants to come to some sort of agreement on their own. In just 15 minutes it was decided that we could return to the ranch on the 28th. It made headlines in the local papers.

July 28 Embudo to Cibola, New Mexico, hot and dry

We started the day at the fiesta in Taos marching down the main drag to the tune of the GSA marching song. We were supposed to meet at 3 for our grand return, but no Eorr. “At 5 she appeared stumbling down the road with friends, singing, laughing and yelling. It turned out she had made some bet and had downed 13 whiskey sours. They were very watered down due to the fiesta. We boarded our bus and she drove like a mad woman honking the horn and zigzagging. We later found out that she was not even high, but just elated in being able to come ‘home’. At last 7 miles from the ranch she burned out the clutch. Lane, me, Griffin and Grossman walked in. Got there after long walk--almost first. Very sleepy and was really deeply touched by the ranch scene. Fell asleep in the supply room.” God, what a climatic return that was!

July 29-August 3 Cibola, New Mexico, hot

Most of us just lolled around, doing little except playing baseball and a dance with the San Cristobel boys--much enjoyed being home at last.

August 4 Cibola/Santa Domingo Pueblo/Chimayo/Cibola, New Mexico hot as hell

A very long day. We started at 5am, attended the corn dance at the Pueblo, where I bought a corn necklace and turquoise/obsidian ring. Hung out with the Cates and then off for a trip to Chimayo to look at their lovely hand woven textiles. Slept all the way back and failed to show at the evening dance. Completely pooped.

August 7-9 Cibola to Monument Valley, Utah/Arizona, hot

On the way to M V we passed through a lovely pine forest in the hills. Several of us rode on the roof rack of the bus but I had to get down because of the extreme motion—it reminded me too much of the accident. Soon the boys were asked to vacate the roof, and the ladies climbed up and took their shirts off. Unfortunately we could see nothing from the inside of the bus, but someone passed them up a condom, which was greeted by much hilarity. MV was absolutely gorgeous—the backdrop of almost every western movie ever made.

Eorr organized a “truth session” directed against Bob Schultheis. He defended himself well. We saw lots of snakes and scorpions. The next day there was further bad blood between Eorr and Bob. He wrote “Peg Winter loves Eorr” in big letters, and Eleanor was

completely beside herself. I had to leave, climbed a mesa, and wrote in my diary. It was almost like Lord of the Flies. Things had become so polarized that everyone had to take a stand. I stood up and publicly denounced Bob at lunch. Eorr was thrilled, but to this day I am ashamed of this crass attempt to curry favor. If ever there was a twinkly/ brown nose, I was it that day. That afternoon, the boys were herded off to a mesa while the girls all went to a water pump in the middle of nowhere. They took their clothes off in the desert and danced in the water spray.

August 10-11 MV to Keet Seel (Now spelled Kiet Siel), Arizona, hotter then hell
Arrived at the parking lot around 2 and set out for the Native ruins. Laura Sereno, Bob, Bill Winter and Andy Knapp stayed behind. Eleanor had been told it was a short hike, but it was actually more like 8.5 miles. We walked up and down on the cliff face dropping 1,000 feet along the way, then followed a trail through a narrow valley with a small stream with the odd cattle turd—not very drinkable. High cliffs with massive overhangs surrounded us. There was lots of broken pottery and other signs of ancient habitation. When we reached the site, it was absolutely beautiful, tucked under a rugged cliff. All were exhausted, and it was too late to start back, so we settled down in a large kiva for the night. Everything was so well preserved that I had the eerie feeling that the 13th century inhabitants were lurking just out of sight.

Kiet Siel was settled around 1250 ad, and then soon abandoned after the Great Drought of 1276-1299. It remains one of the best-preserved Anastasi ruins in Arizona. We spent a very restless nigh. There were almost no flashlights, water, food, or

bedding--only a small fire. We took turns using each other's stomachs for pillows. Morning came at last and we packed up and headed back. It was easy at first, but the temperature rapidly climbed above 100, and the lack of food, water and sleep created a hellish mix. "Walked up canyon and just about died. It was bad. When we arrived back at the bus all the food, water and juices were gone. Everything was eaten and drunk up by Schultheis and Knapp. People raised hell. Both ran away and there was a big cut up. They turned up later and told us they wanted to leave the ranch and go home. Ate and slept all the way back to Cibola." Within a day, the two miscreants were expelled in disgrace, and put on a bus home with a few dollars for food. I still can't help thinking this situation was handled badly. It wasn't their fault we didn't get back till the next afternoon dying of hunger and thirst.

August 13-14 Cibola, hot. Recovering

August 15-17 Cibola to Hart Lake, New Mexico and back- hot during the day freezing cold at night

Took a trip way up in the New Mexican Mountains. I rode a nasty horse that suddenly raced down a steep draw, bucking and snorting. Terrified. Then there was raucously loud thunder and lightening storm, which made the horses crazy. Polito took a long distance shot at a deer but missed. We had steaks and fell into bed, but little sleep as it was freezing cold. The next day we all built lean-tos, and I declined all rides with the horses. It was much warmer the second night as we slept fully clothed under shelter.

After walking back to the buses I met Sandy, and he told me that Gabriel and Polito claimed that I was a lazy good for nothing on this trip. Crushed

August 18 Cibola to Chimayo, New Mexico, cold and hot

Spend the day in the ranch library and left for Chimayo at 6pm. Arrived at 8:30. Picked up some turquoise and a gorgeous grey blanket for \$36.

August 19 -20 Cibola, cold cloudy

We decided to put on a play about the Virgin Mary for the village of San Cristobel.

Mary, played by Gary Simons, gets knocked up under a bouncing sheet. Very funny, but the villagers remained stony faced. I wonder if they were offended? The next day was our last of the summer. We had a huge dinner and danced until 3 am with the valley boys playing their loud electric guitars. Eorr joked around and called our style of dance the “vagina reel”.

August 21-27 Cibola to Arlington, Virginia, cool

The caravan back was a bit of an anticlimax after this eventful summer. The Dodge and International school buses were exceedingly well behaved. Mosquitoes and a deluge of rain followed us from campsite to campsite. As the voyage came to an end there was much sentimental reminiscing and folk singing. In spite of the rough edges, the summer remains in my mind both wonderful and unforgettable. I concluded my diary in capitals ‘I LOVE CIBOLA. WILL I EVER RETURN? I HOPE TO GOD SO!! ‘

I actually did stop by in 1969 on the way back from grad school at UC Riverside, and was saddened to see the burned out ruins of the main hall. They said it was arson.

--Douglas Hamilton, January 2010