

# The Kokopelli Journals

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## Chapter 6: Santa Fe, Evening Out

“There are many kinds of fruit that grow on the tree of life, but none so sweet as friendship.” – Anonymous

*(This is a partial chapter to introduce you to Cindy & Art, both a part of the story.)*



(Cactus by  
John Salidas)

### Cynthia

Pete and I were to rendezvous with our friend, Cynthia. We had met her the year before at the Dairy Queen in Chama, New Mexico, when we stopped with a car full of parched kids. She had been standing to the side, there in the restaurant, after she had put in her order. I walked over and spoke to her as she was wearing leather chaps, which meant – to me – horses. I asked her if she rode and she had said, “Not what you think,” pointing to her Harley Davidson, parked outside. I had to grin. We started talking, sharing a little of our lives, and ended up trading addresses, as I had just had Lasik surgery done on my eyes, and she was interested in this vision-correcting operation. Before leaving the Grand Canyon, that trip, I had dropped her a post-card telling her how much I’d enjoyed meeting her. When we arrived home, there in our mail awaited a postcard from Cindy, telling me the same thing. We started writing. The letters became lengthier and then we’d call one another, having so much to share. Before I knew it, Cynthia had set me up with an e-mail account on Hotmail to bring our correspondence into the 21st Century. I called her “Motorcycle Mama;” she called me “Wild West Woman.” Our friendship blossomed – by snail mail, by e-mail, cards and the telephone – which is hilarious as we had only met in person,

for about twenty minutes, there in Chama.

And so here we were, more than a year later, about to see Cynthia again. She planned to come down to Santa Fe to meet us at our hotel with her husband, David, and their three children. We would have quite the time that first night in! But when we arrived at the Comfort Inn about 4 PM, checked in and went to our suite, we found she had ridden her bike down from Maxwell, where they live, solo. For our anniversary she had waiting for us a bottle of Santa Fe Vineyards White Zinfandel, a bouquet of flowers, and a card with a note saying she had had to come alone. That was okay – we were happy to see her and the three of us would hit the town that night. We looked her up, exchanged big hugs, and thanked her for her thoughtfulness. How she’d managed to haul all those gifts to the hotel, especially the flowers, on “Smiley,” her motorcycle, I don’t know, but we sure did appreciate it. Pete and I decided to take her to dinner somewhere in the Plaza.

Cynthia is about 5’4” and jokes with us about her height. I am 5’8”; Pete is 6’ even, so we hover a little above her, but amongst friends, who cares? It makes for some good-natured ribbing. Cindy is slim, petite, pretty and a little boyish, with her short, chic hairstyle. She has a soft, slightly accented voice, is very pleasant and has an unassuming way about her. She knows this

area well, as she was born in the tiny Arizona town of Ganado, directly south of Chinle but many miles away, even as the crow flies. Cindy has lived and taught on reservations, has been a missionary in churches to aid the Indians, and was a lively tour-guide for us that night.

As we headed to our Camry for our evening visit, we paused for a moment entranced by the late afternoon sky. Clouds whorled and danced in diaphanous wisps through the fading turquoise of day. Mauves and apricots swirled through these mists, painting for us a visual welcome to Santa Fe. Just south of the hotel and the restaurant next to us, The Horseman's Café, a *huge* American flag – at half-mast, in memory of the lives lost or irretrievably impacted by the hijack attacks just eleven days prior – snapped proudly in the winds against this magnificent canvas. I felt a catch of emotion in my throat watching the red, white and blue against that Maxfield Parrish palette and stood there a moment to simply absorb the mixed bag of intense feelings that temporarily overwhelmed me. How can there be such beauty in this world and, at the same time, so much hatred?



We loaded up and headed down Cerrillos Road to make our way to the Paseo de Peralta, down Palace Avenue, and parked in front of the beautiful St. Francis Cathedral. We would take

a leisurely stroll through the Plaza and enjoy a little magical mystery touring through this eclectic area, taking in the array of festive and/or whimsical Southwest window displays, as we walked. Dinner would find us when all were ready, which was soon enough, as we were all pretty hungry and additionally enticed by the luscious smells wafting through the air.

There were *so many* potential places to eat... the aromatic scents and alluring decors made choosing difficult, but we finally settled on The Coyote Café, with a balcony called the Rooftop Cantina high above the streets, overlooking the activities below. We could eat and still not miss the action. The Coyote Café is quite the happening nightspot. It is adorned with howling, seated caricatures of the bandana-wearing canines and metal Mariachi skeletons playing in a band hang on a huge wall overlooking the inside dining area. Large tropical plants grace the Mexican tiled floors and the whole atmosphere feels welcoming and lighthearted.

We sat at the bar overlooking the shops and restaurants below, starting the evening with Margaritas for the ladies, and Pete's inevitable beer. Before dinner arrived we were moved to a table close to the bar and could watch the comings and goings from the kitchen, bringing lucky patrons all sorts of delectable salads, varieties of Southwest cuisine, and American plates, for the less adventurous. Cynthia, Pete and I shared stories and we had a fine old time. We had plenty of questions about her life growing up in Arizona, her time in New Mexico, and of the area, in general. But as the evening passed, exhaustion and "altitude sickness" set in. This happens to some not yet accustomed to the high thin air; it's important to acclimate slowly and drink plenty of fluids – water, not alcohol. I developed a killer headache, after the one drink.

Cindy, long acclimated to the high mountainous altitudes, enjoyed a second Margarita and Pete had a second beer, unharmed by the altitude or fatigue.

Bless her heart, after dinner Cindy was ready to party. On New Mexico time and fueled by two large Margarita's, the night was young for her. No children, no worries, our girl wanted to *play!* She wanted to find a band and dance the night away! But Pete and I – two hours ahead on the East coast clock, jet-lagged, and pooped in general – had to regretfully rein her in. My head was ready to explode with one of those headaches that made the jolting action of simply walking a misery. We were light years apart in our plans for the remainder of the evening. What a fine way to start these carefree days and our reunion with our charming friend, but *c'est la vie*. Poor kid.

Back at the hotel Cynthia gravitated to the hot tub while Pete and I called it a night. So much for our 'romantic first-night away' – I swallowed a couple of heavy-duty aspirin, drank lots of water, and opted-out of anything more. All I wanted to do was lay my head on a cool, soft pillow, find a position where it didn't pound, and not move a muscle. Pete, too, was exhausted by then and glad simply to sleep. And sleep we did. Deeply, quietly, laced-together there in the dim foreign room, we did not peep until morn.

The next morning brought relief, with solid sleep and another mega-dose of aspirin to start the day. By the time we met up with Cindy, who was already up and raring to go (does the girl run on Energizers?) we were good to go, ourselves.

Time to find Art and say hello.

## Art

We met Art last summer at this hotel with our family in tow, which is a big reason we were back at the Comfort Inn. He is responsible for

the breakfast bar during the week, and takes great pride in its quality and appearance. I complimented him on this fact last June. He then came to our table, with maps and tid-bits of information about Santa Fe, Taos, and New Mexican history and lore at his fingertips, all of which was extremely helpful in having our first experience as tourists in these parts be flavored by a local.

Art is an older gentleman, gray and slight, a little bow-legged and kind of shy. I fell in love with him at first sight; he exudes kindness. A pilot in World War II, he shared photographs of his days in the service, during the first trip and more on this trip, as well. Art's dark eyes, under heavy graying brows, twinkle with intelligence, humor, and promised mischief. He called himself a 'Coyote' (someone half-Mexican); the other half was Irish. Art often spoke of his wife, Carole, throughout our original visit, and again on our anniversary trip. Pete and I kidded one another about Carole's existence at all. Did she, really, or was she like the fabled 'Mrs. Columbo' – always referred to, but never seen? I let Cindy in on our speculation, for when she met Art that morning, the verdict was still out.



Santa Fe's own "Bremontown Musicians"



Pete, Laura, Cynthia, & Art  
at the Comfort Inn, Santa Fe

### *Sunday, September 23rd*

That Sunday morning, our first full day in Santa Fe, Art pooh-poohed breakfast at the hotel, insisting that he take us all out to The Pantry, a local breakfast and lunch restaurant with huge servings of indigenous food. He introduced us to the concept of asking for both red and green chilies with our eggs. "When you ask for both in these parts," he explained, "we call it Christmas." I asked impishly, "Why not Feliz Navidad?" and winked at him. Art just cocked an eyebrow at me and admonished with a smile, "Behave yourself; I'm teaching you something."

After our lively and entertaining breakfast at The Pantry, snapping photographs of one another

during and after eating, we returned to the hotel. Cindy needed to pack up to go. As she had ridden 'Smiley' for the visit, she was all dressed in her motorcycle leathers, her big space helmet, and had rain gear close at hand. She found a place to pack the Virginia peanut tin we had given her. All ready to take off now, Cynthia looked small but totally competent there in her leather jacket astride the big Harley. With hugs and promises of staying in touch while on the road, Cindy was on her way back to her own three children, all younger than ours, her husband and her home, 140 miles away in Maxwell, New Mexico, close to Eagle's Nest and Cimarron. This was Cindy's reality.



Laura joy-riding with Cindy  
on 'Smiley' in parking lot.

After this Pete and I were on our own and no longer pressed for time and exhausted. The afternoon ahead was wide open with whatever we wanted to do. Hey, hey. No difficulties deciding here.... bring on the hot tub and a quiet, spacious suite bedecked with flowers and wine... We knew what to do. The headache was long gone, we had rested-up, and now it was time to play. Twenty-five years of togetherness had made practice about perfect...