

# Aztec

Legends and Lore



"Aztec Legends and Lore" - The work of these students has sparked the curiosity of newcomers and stirred reflection in the older generation. The legends, and interpretation of old accounts that has endured through the generations, as well as new stories, are a part of the history of the Animas River Valley just as the settlement of the early Pioneers, Spaniards or the incorporation of Aztec as the county seat.

*Eric J. Aune  
Former City Planner*

This book is dedicated to Mr. Aune, who has provided strong community support for the writing project. He is truly a planner with a vision of the past and the future.

Mythology classes at Aztec High School created a project to collect and publish stories and legends of the area. Many of the students, themselves, are members of pioneer families. All involved are concerned with the preservation of the unique heritage: Anazasi, Ute, Navajo, Hispanic and Anglo.

This is the first publication combined with additional stories written and collected this spring and presented in a bound edition. The editing and marketing is the responsibility of the Mock Trial Team. All proceeds are donated for the competition and travel expenses of the Mock Trial Team.

Aztec LL

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	6
The Spirit Within .....	7
Ruins Road .....	8
Chockcherry Canyon .....	9
Dutchman's Hill Gold .....	9
Frightened by A Ghost .....	10
Strange Things Happen .....	11
The Deer .....	11
Family Jewels .....	12
The Lady .....	13
Drip .....	13
The Three Arrows .....	14
Christmas To Remember .....	15
A Boy and His Dog .....	16
New Sandstone .....	16
The UFO .....	17
The Phantom .....	18
The Trunk .....	19
The Trip To Town .....	19
Battle .....	20
Journal Entry .....	21
Who's Racing in Dead Car Canyon .....	21
Run, Faster, Run .....	22
Spring Surprise - '75 .....	22
Ghosts of the Animas .....	23
The Lost Town .....	23
Cow .....	24
The Lady of the Hills .....	25
Burial Ground .....	27

## Table of Contents cont.

Fire at Night.....	27
Pancho Villa Up North.....	28
Yangośś .....	28
Ello McCoy .....	28
Hare Beans .....	29
Trains and Trouble .....	29
The Longest Ride of My Life .....	30
Hotel in Aztec .....	31
Bones and Pots .....	31
The Spring of '88.....	32
La Llorona .....	36
Aztec Revisited .....	36
The Haunted Camper .....	37
Lost Horseshoe Mine .....	38
Garlic .....	38
The Ghost of Sonic .....	39
Cox Canyon .....	39
Pipeline Living .....	40
Claw Marks .....	41
The Red and White House .....	41
The Red and White House - Part 2 .....	42
The Ghost Goat .....	42
The Porch .....	43
The Mysterious Light .....	43
The Coco Man .....	44
The Spanish Armor .....	45
The Spanish Armor - 1997 .....	45
Outhouse .....	46
How Times Have Changed .....	46
The Big Flood .....	47
The Fish .....	47
Walking in the Rain .....	48
All-American Town .....	48

## Table of Contents cont.

The Appearance .....	49
Navajo Dam Road .....	49
The Bar Flume .....	50
Hank .....	50
The Spirit of the Hills .....	51
Basin Motors .....	52
It Went Bump in the Night .....	53
Devil's Gap .....	53
The Light at Gobenador .....	54
The Tracks .....	54
Gunfight at Angel Peak .....	55
The Mormans in Aztec .....	56
Last Chance .....	56
Tent Fire .....	57
The Boarded Up Room .....	58
Footprints .....	59
Rincon Theatre - 1957 .....	59
Gold Canyon .....	60
The Owl .....	60
Animas River Adventure .....	61
That Old Dog .....	61
Ghost - A.H.S. ....	62
The Old Cottonwood .....	63
Winter .....	63
The Girl .....	64
The Moke House .....	65
Ghost in Aztec .....	67
Church .....	67
The Road .....	68
The Famous UFO - Unknown by Most .....	69
The Catfish .....	71
The Shirt Ripping .....	71
The Medicine Man .....	72

## Table of Contents cont.

Never Cry Wolf .....	73
Someone .....	73
Gold in Potter's Canyon .....	74
George F. Bruington .....	75
Believe Me .....	76
High School Cove .....	77
Aztec Memories .....	77
My Grandpa and The Gold .....	78
Yet Another Catfish Story of Navajo Dam .....	79
The Ghost in My House .....	79
The Hanging Trees .....	80
Movin' On .....	80
Where's My Baby .....	81
Drunks - Not in Aztec .....	81
Fishing Line Sinkers .....	82
Skinwalker .....	83
Navajo Dam .....	83
Grandmother Lulu Olive Rathjen .....	84
Aztec UFO .....	87
Basement Terror .....	87
Gold in Hart Canyon .....	88
Window .....	88
The River of Souls .....	89
Fred Sahara .....	90
A Summer Sensation .....	91
A Ruin Once Lost .....	93
Wiped Out Ruins .....	93
There Is But a Step Between Me and Death .....	94
Acknowledgments .....	96

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### This Lonesome Place

Day after day it sits alone, unknown. It stands in Aztec, yet outside of the worry of its people. Its old frame withering in a wind that has been over millions of miles, touched every sagebrush, tree, and animal. The Hogan has seen more conflicts in life than anyone who knows of it. Outside this small treasure, mounds of Indian ruins stand untouched. The ground you walk on is covered with fragments of someone's art, but someone is gone, hundreds of years ago. This place is lonesome, without its caretakers of another time. It stands quiet with exception of a common visitor, this hogan is a lonesome place.

Clint Pavey



Zellie Montoya

## Introduction

In Northwest New Mexico stands a small town time has touched very little. The name this town goes by is Aztec. It carries a proud heritage and history through the people and buildings.

Founded officially in 1892, Aztec was first inhabited by the Anasazi. Their buildings and artifacts can still be found. After the mysterious disappearance of several thousand inhabitants, the area remained home to groups of Navajos, Utes and Spanish Conquistadors. In the late 1800's, pioneers and ranchers began to settle in and around Aztec. With them, came permanence and a chance. Dreams achieved and hearts mended, Aztec truly typifies a western town.

*Justin Beasley*

Written in the language of the storyteller, the legends told in this book are presented in good faith and the experiences related are authentic to the best knowledge of the contributors.

*Norma Garrell*



## The Spirit Within

My Mother and I own a shop in Aztec on Main Street. The building is one of the oldest in town - built in 1890. It has been everything from a stage stop, saloon, hotel, birthing center, hair dressers, flower shop, and even residence. There are many times you can still feel the spirits who have dwelt here.

I was standing by the gas stove in our store trying to keep warm one day last winter, while I was reading "Aztec Legends and Lore" - the first one. I began to feel a presence, but was trying to ignore it. Many times it feels like something is behind you looking over your shoulder, but when you turn around there is no one there. All of a sudden I felt something tug at the hair on top of my head.

Later that day, I was working by the cash register stamping decorations onto bags. The cash register kept making noises like someone was pushing at the buttons, but no one else was around. Then the stamps all began falling on the ground for no reason at all. It was almost as if the spirits were letting me know they were there.

*Anonymous*

## Ruins Road

The real ruins road is an Anasazi trail still visible after almost a thousand years. Aztec Ruins and the surrounding area had hundreds of inhabitants who built homes into small cliffs and apartment style homes on the hills near the river.

To the north, northwest, east and southeast more groups of the ancient people lived. All paths seem to lead to Chaco Canyon including the one from Aztec. The one north appears to head towards Dolores and Cortez, Colorado. An archeologist friend explained that messages, travel and trade apparently were the reasons for a real road.

Chaco was a major center in the late Anasazi period either for religious reasons, a trading center or both. Trails go south out of Chaco Ruins as well.

While the trail is on both public and private lands, interrupted by highways and towns, it has been actually traced by students from San Juan College and their professors. The place it is most obviously seen is north of Aztec out into the hills toward La Plata.

*Norma Garrett*

## **Chokecherry Canyon**

If you take Indian pots from sacred grounds, like burial grounds, everybody says the Skinwalker will come and get you. I have heard stories about people being chased. They were chased out of Chokecherry Canyon by a deer. Deer don't chase people. It must have been a Skinwalker. The people took pots when they shouldn't have. Another guy with a bunch of his friends destroyed a sacred burial ground around here. A crow started following him around. It has watched him every night and it won't leave. Some people who are alive become Skinwalkers to do evil. They can become animals.

*Ronnie Hadley*

## **Dutchman's Hill Gold**

A long time ago there were miners who would bring their gold down from places in Colorado such as Telluride and Ouray. They would move by wagon train to New Mexico to get the gold refined. A group of Dutchmen lived on a hill that overlooked the wagon trail. Each day they viewed the miners and dreamed of the gold the wagons earned. The Dutchmen then devised a plan to kill the miners and steal the gold. The next time they saw the miners they executed the plan. They attacked the wagons and killed the miners. They stole tons of gold bars and one very large gold nugget. They hid the bars in a cave on their hill and buried the nugget. They drew a map to the nugget and left it at home. On a journey to the cave they began to make a map to it. In the cave they laid the bars, but when they tried to leave the cave; it caved in. They were trapped with the map and gold. Four generations later a relative of the Dutchmen found the map to the nugget. He dug it up and named the hill, Dutchman's Hill. The bars remain undiscovered.

*Allen Elmore*

## Frightened By a Ghost

There is a hotel down on Main Street, Miss Gail's Inn. The owner said soon after they bought the hotel and signed papers, she started to clean one of the rooms at the top of the stairs - room 5. She heard strange noises and said, "Is anyone there?" No answer, so she asked again but still no answer. She spoke to the noises with "I'll be just a few minutes longer" and "How are you?".

Her husband, John, came home that evening and she told him what had happened, but he didn't believe her. A few days after Gail had some customers. That night they heard the same noises and saw strands of white go across the room, but still no clues. They did go and tell Gail what they had seen. Another couple staying there saw two white strands, but thought it couldn't be a ghost.

One night later, John was sitting in a chair reading the newspaper and looked up. He actually saw two ghosts. Gail didn't rent the room to anyone for a month. Gail's son came down to visit and stayed in that room. While they were all downstairs watching T.V. they saw three ghosts come down the stairs and go out the door. Gail hasn't seen these ghosts for over two years.

*Michael Sieczkowski - Told by: Gail Aspromonte*

## Strange Things Happen

Strange things happen to people out in the hills. Maybe it is just the mind playing tricks because you have an over-active imagination. It could be a number of things. One night a buddy of mine was out in the hills just off of North Light Plant Road. His car was parked just off a dirt road on a hill. He and a friend of his were sitting in his car getting ready to get out when the car started rocking back and forth with no explanation. Needless to say, they did not get out; they left. On their way out the car lights went out and the engine pulled down as if it was pulling a heavy load. After a few seconds everything went back to normal and the lights came back on. They never figured out why.

*Danny Vickers*

## The Deer

It's 4:30 in the morning and amazingly I'm awake. I get dressed and step outside only to find that the night brought snow and cold. Everyone's ready now so we head off. We are going hunting again, a family tradition that goes back as far as memory allows. We get to where we're going and the day starts. We only see a few small deer, passing them over, wincing because we know we will regret it later. But later that evening traveling through new fallen snow, I get my chance. I bring my gun to my shoulder, bring down the crosshairs and fire. For the moment nothing is thought about. I shoot once more, knowing the bullet strayed its mark. I wait awhile with my brother. Then we head out to find it. We search for what seems an eternity and end up empty handed. The shots that brought an adrenaline rush are only a memory, but it makes all worth going next year. This is what makes a tradition, one story, the deer.

*Clint Pavey*

## Family Jewels

Clothes and keepsakes were often handed down from generation to generation. In the Henriella Jordan family, who go back to original pioneers, a watch and watch chain were given to daughters. There is a slide on the chain to lengthen or shorten it. Some ladies tucked it into their blouses.

Lace collars were also popular, often hand-made. In this family they were given to another member and saved, some were round and some tied like a scarf. Jet beads were worn as a necklace and sewn on a dress. All the dresses worn for special occasions were long, dark and with puffy sleeves that went to the wrist. Ladies in the pictures include members of the pioneer families of the Blancetts and McCoys.

*Henriella Jordan*



### **The Lady**

A few miles outside of Aztec there was a man coming back from a dance. Along the highway he saw a young looking woman dressed in an older style of clothing. He stopped on the side of the road to offer her a ride. She looked in the tinted window of the new, red, Chevy pickup. He rolled down the window, turned down the Garth Brooks blaring on the radio and asked the young woman if she would like a ride. She looked at him with a blank expression on her face and nodded. The man found himself strangely attracted to her. After a long drive down a dirt road, they finally reached a magnificent house. The young lady just got out, looked back at the man, nodded, and went into the house without a word. The man went home and slept for a few hours. The next morning, when the man returned to his truck, he noticed a hairbrush so he went to return it to the young girl. When he reached the house once more, he noticed the house was in shambles; all the windows were boarded up, the door kicked in, and the house was vacant.

*Anonymous*

### **Drip**

In the cool dark nights, when the fog falls low to the ground and the moon hangs high in the sky, the Aztec Cemetery tells a hidden secret. It is said on these rare nights that when the clock hits midnight, the trickle of water can be heard inside a tombstone that rests upon the dead. The women walked into the cemetery and followed the trickling sounds of water that dripped and echoed deep within the tombstone that sits on the hill. The sounds soon stopped and were replaced with a deep, deadly silence. So if the fog is low and the moon is high, listen for the sound of the dripping water that flows in the tombstone on top of an Aztec hill.

*Anonymous*

## The Three Arrows

My grandpa, who has lived here all of his life, told me a story that his dad had told him. When the Spanish Conquistadors came through the area there were a lot of them to start out with, but after many fights with the local Indians, sickness, and accidents only a few Spaniards were left. They had all kinds of treasure that they had stolen throughout the area. Since most of the leaders and officers had been killed, the few remaining decided to fill their pockets with whatever they could carry of the loot and head home. They decided to bury all the treasure along with armor and other stuff they didn't want to carry, in a cave way out in a canyon. They planned to come back for it someday so they made arrow marks in three spots pointing to the entrance to the canyon. I found all three of the arrows; one is on a mesa above Cedar Hill, one is out by the radio towers on Navajo Dam Road, and the other is out by Cutter Dam near Largo Canyon. All the arrows are identical and are carved about an inch deep in sandstone and are about three feet long with Spanish writing on them. You can tell they're old because they are weathered and moss and lichen are growing in them. My friends and I go looking whenever we can. Sometimes we will hike way out in the middle of nowhere for a whole day and find nothing, but once in a while we find more Spanish writing or artifacts. So we know we are getting close. The story was told to a friend of my great-grandpa by a relative of one of the few remaining Spaniards who said he never made it home to Spain. They just settled up in Colorado and never went back.

*Anonymous*



## Christmas To Remember

Early Christmas morning before anyone else was up they got me out of bed to go visit an Aunt and Uncle. It was still dark outside and the snow was falling heavy. The snow was so deep and when they cleaned the streets I couldn't see over the top. But we went on the street car to town and on to the train depot.

We took a long ride to Parle City, Utah. We had Christmas dinner and enjoyed a lot of visiting. They didn't know I was going to be there so the next day we went to town and I had Christmas presents given to me. I was the only child there.

It was lots of fun, sleigh rides , a lot of things. I remember in town we had sidewalks. There it was just wooden boards nailed together for people to walk on and keep out of the snow and ice. The time went fast for me. When I went to bed New Year's Eve, I didn't know they were going to wake me up at 12:00 and hear the men on horses whooping and hollarin' and shootin' their guns like you see in the wild west picture shows.

The next day we visited my grandmother and went home again. That has been, let's see 1910 - 77 years ago. That's the first Christmas I remember.

*Sara Dusenbery - Told by: Gertrude Dusenbery*

## **A Boy and His Dog**

When a friend and I were sitting in a wash we heard a noise. It wasn't the first time we had heard this noise. My friend shivered and said, "It's coming closer." "Don't worry", I said, "It's not bad." I knew this, because I have the ability to see spirits, but as I said this, the spirit's aura changed. This is the kind of spirit that I call a shape-shifting spirit, because it can have a pleasant aura at first, and change to the aura of a bad spirit. Anyway back to the story. "Get up quick; let's get out of here." I got up but my friend couldn't. She started to gag and cough. She couldn't catch her breath. The spirit started closer, and her face turned blue. I grabbed her by the hood of her coat and drug her behind me until I could pick her up. When we had crossed under the bridge the spirit stopped and didn't come any further. My friend started breathing better. When I got home I asked my dad about it, and he said that in the 40's a boy had been walking his dog and was hit by a milk truck in that very place.

*Anonymous*

## **New Sandstone**

My friends and I like to go camping a lot. There is one spot that we like to go camping at called New Sandstone out on Ruins Road. They have always told me on any particular night, just at any moment you can sometimes hear a young lady or man start to scream. Whatever it is screams really loud because there is a well location about a quarter of a mile away that is quite loud. You can hear the screams over the racket of the well location. The scream doesn't sound like an animal. So that's why they think it's a human scream.

*Anonymous*

## The UFO

A couple of years ago, a friend and I went out in the hills and had a big bonfire. After a while, forty-five minutes or so, we saw a bright light. At first we thought it was a plane, then we decided it couldn't be because the way it moved. We saw a streak of light and it stopped.

It looked like it was pretty close but it was really about 500-600 feet away. The bright light stayed there for about five seconds. Then it disappeared and we never saw it again. We stayed camping in Hart's Canyon; I was scared but my friend thought it was cool and after a while I thought it was cool, too.

The next day we heard of a sighting on the news about a UFO. So we thought it was the same one.

*Anonymous*



## The Phantom

It may come as a surprise to many students at Aztec High School to learn of the strange happenings occurring in the Multi-purpose building. As a drama student for the past four Years, myself, along with others, has experienced abnormal occurrences.

The story goes; at one time long before the high school was Built, there was a train track that ran where the multi-purpose building now stands. During the construction of the track, a man was killed and it is believed that he still lingers around the sight.

My first experience with the spirit came when I was a sophomore. I had a 6:00 pm call for a 7:00 pm show; the moment I walked in the building I had a very unsettled feeling and noticed it was colder then usual. I went and sat down in one of the wings off-stage and turned around to see who was standing there. I was absolutely positive that I heard someone breathing. Then a few moments later, the back stage curtains started to move as though someone was dragging their hand across them. Of course being the level headed human being that I am, I thought there was a perfectly good explanation of this. Boy was I wrong; over the past years I have experienced: moved props, lights with a mind of their own, foot steps walking across the stage and many, many uncomfortable feelings.

I am just one teller of the tale . Ask any actor, technician, or drama coach who has spent a considerable amount or time in the multi-purpose budding at Aztec High School, and he will tell you his own encounter with the Phantom.

*Tim Martinez*

## **The Trunk**

Years back when my grandpa was but a teen, he and his brother were riding horses out in the hills behind Southside River Road. They were a few miles away from home and they came across a deep hole, probably twenty feet deep. They stopped to look and down in the hole was a large wooden trunk. The hole was too deep to climb into so they decided to ride back home and get a rope. They started back after getting a rope and followed their tracks back to the hole, but when they reached the end of their tracks the hole was gone, like it was never really there. There was no dirt that was moved to cover it; everything was the same except for the missing hole.

*Jesse Utton*

## **The Trip to Town**

Years ago, when the ranches still used horses and wagons for transportation, an old rancher who we know used to come to town in wagons from Bayfield. They would come to Aztec to pick up supplies or whatever they needed. They would leave Bayfield early in the morning and make it to the bottom of Bondad Hill by evening and camp beside the river. The next morning they would make it to Aztec. On the way back, they would camp in the same spot and then go back into Bayfield the next day. When they came to Aztec they made sure to get enough supplies so they would not have to make a trip very often, not more than every three or four months.

*Dan Vickers*

## Battle

One day when I was about seven or eight my grandfather told me a story of an Indian War. It took place when he was seven or eight out near Navajo Dam in a valley.

My grandfather had seven brothers and sisters - eight children in all. My great-grandmother died along with her ninth child while giving birth. So my great-grandfather had to care for eight kids on his own. They were poor but never hungry. My great-grandfather would slaughter a stray cow and hang it from a tree in the dead of winter. Every time someone was hungry they would get a knife, slice a piece of meat and cook it on a stick over the fire.

There was this time a cow had just been hung from the tree and an Indian tribe came into camp. One Indian in particular explained to my great-grandfather to be on a certain ridge by noon the next day.

The Indians camped by my grandfather's home that night and at the crack of dawn, packed their stuff and went on top of the ridge. By noon, after his nap, my grandfather heard a clatter coming from the valley and raced to the ridge to see what it was.

It was a battle between two Indian tribes. All he could see were fighters running around and some falling to the ground.

*Shane Peace - Told by: Roy Peace*

## Journal Entry

According to legend in the early 1900's a wagon train carrying nearly one million dollars worth of gold bars was raided by bandits. After being chased for several days, the bandits left their treasure in a cave around the hills outside of Aztec. It is said that after these bandits were caught they told the sheriff exactly where they had left the loot, but after searching for several years it was said to be a hoax. A journal was found years later and led some people to believe that there is a treasure still waiting to be found.

*Willie Montoya*

## Who's Racing in Dead Car Canyon?

Back in the sixties a lot of people would drag race out on Navajo Dam Road. The cars turned onto a dirt road. One of the cars ran out of gas. So the other car left to go into town to get some gas. When they came back, the car was gone. They went further into the canyon trying to find the car. They never found the car, but when they tried to leave, they found they were lost. One of the people suggested they camp. They did, and in the morning, the boy who was sleeping on the ground under the car was there, but the car had disappeared without a trace. He hiked out of the canyon and swore to never return. So that is why when you go into Dead Car Canyon, you can hear cars racing.

*Kate Malone*

## **Run, Faster, Run**

Stray dogs had been coming on Ray's Grandma's property and killing chickens. Day after day the bodies would be strewn across the lawn. A pack was known to run together through the country led by a big coyote-looking dog. Soon, tired of the problem, Ray and his grandma stayed up with 22's to end the killing. About 4:00 in the morning the dogs came around and Ray shot the leader who fell in a nearby ditch. Thinking that he would return later to pick up the dog, Ray left. When he returned and was about 100 yards off, Ray watched an Indian man rise in the dog's place and run off in the brush. Later that morning a Native American man checked into San Juan Regional, shot by a 22 rifle near a chicken coup.

*Justin Beasley*

## **Spring Surprise - 1975**

My husband and sons were gone about their duties or games. It was just getting dark so I decided to water my plants, while supper was on the stove. I took both of my dogs out with me. The dogs started cowering under the roses, so I stopped my work long enough to try and get them to come out. When they would not obey, not a thing, then I looked up at the darkening sky. To the north was a sphere with beautiful rotating lights. I stood and observed as best as I could. It was shaped like an inverted ferris wheel, with red, green and blue round lights, that were rotating. No sounds, or windows or propellers were on *this* machine. My husband drove up and I yelled, "Honey, look up." He froze saying, "What in the world is that?" My neighbor came home about this time, and I told her to look. She walked in the house saying, "I don't see it and I don't want to see it." My husband and I watched it closely for a few minutes. When it suddenly took off for the north again and in seconds had disappeared from view. What was it? I didn't have a clue, and like my neighbor, I really don't want to know.

*Dale Townley*



## **Ghosts of the Animas**

The Animas River has taken the lives of many people. According to Indian legend, the Animas was properly named as The River of Lost Souls. The Indians believed the people who lost their lives in the river would not go to the afterlife and their souls would wander for eternity. Several people in the Animas River valley claim to have seen the ghosts of the lost souls wandering the river banks. My grandpa told me he knows people who live down on the river bottom who see ghosts wandering around. They are just a presence. They see the form and what is behind it. They see them at night and during the day.

*Anonymous*

## **The Lost Town**

I was told of a town that many years ago was inhabited by people. Supposedly there was a ranch with houses and a convenience store. Now the town is under the water at the bottom of Navajo Lake. The town was evacuated in the 50's. The people left the town as the canyon was dammed off and filled with water, which we know as Navajo Dam. I've heard people talk of this place. It's location was approximately in the middle of the lake. The people who lived in this town were upset and you can hear their thoughts of losing their home on the shore of the lake.

*Shane Hilbers*

## Cow

We were reminiscing about school days. The story came up about a cow that had been taken up several steps into the entrance of the school, up another large amount of stairs and into the superintendent's office.

When the weekend was over, came Monday morning. Was the superintendent surprised when he walked into his office. Not only was he very angry, but so was the custodian, who had to clean up the mess.

In retelling this story, one lady asked the man who was laughing so much about it, "I suppose you were one of the people who did it?" He continued to laugh and asked her, "How did you know I was one of them?" She laughed and said, "I didn't, you just told me." Growing up in Aztec in the 40's and 50's was fun.

*Cleofas Montoya*



## The Lady of the Hills

My family purchased a 140 acre tract of land that was to be turned into a subdivision. In the beginning we would go out each evening to familiarize ourselves with the contour of the land so we could begin to envision road layouts and such. I soon got into the habit of walking by myself for exercise and took the same path each day. I noticed a particular rise along my route that had the remains of an old dead tree leaning at an odd angle and the air, immediately to the west looked funny; it almost sparkled. Each evening the space beside the tree would look different and seemed to be taking on a human-sized shape. It wasn't long before I could see an old woman, dressed in ragged dark robes, with long dark hair standing beside the tree. I began to look forward to passing her each evening. My path was approximately 300 feet from where she stood on the hill. As I walked by my hand would raise in greeting of it's own accord and she seemed to nod her head slightly as if in greeting back. One evening, after several weeks, I looked at the hills behind her and saw two shadowlike men with long hair standing above and to the side. They watched her; she stared into the distance. I pondered this situation night and day.

One day because we had family visiting from out of town, we went to the Aztec Ruins National Monument. While outside the front of the great Kiva, I glanced to the south and realized I could see the hills and the rise my "lady" stood on. I realized where she had been staring at was actually Aztec Ruins.

One summer evening as I continued my walk past the lady and around the hills, I came upon a group of young boys setting up camp. I talked with them, but upon leaving began to worry they might start a camp fire and actually end up...

burning down the wonderful trees along the hillsides. As I came abreast of the lady, I muttered under my breath. "Go scare them off." I heard a voice say, "I was here first and if I don't mind you being here, you shouldn't mind them. They will do no harm." I felt I had been reprimanded by a much older, wiser person.

As the subdivision progressed, we built our home on a hill to the east of where the lady stood. From my bedroom balcony I can look directly at the tree trunk but the lady on the other side doesn't turn to look - she continues staring toward the Ruins.

Soon after we moved in, a young member of our family was spending the night. In the morning she was incensed, telling how a man with long hair had climbed in through the bedroom window and stood looking over her sleeping aunt in the same room. The bedroom was on the second floor and there was no way someone came through the window. We tried to explain it was just a dream but she still insists it was real. Not long after that another family came to visit. Our guest bedroom is upstairs along with the other bedrooms. In the morning one family member said she got up in the middle of the night and shut and locked the bedroom door because she kept hearing someone walking along the hallway and when she looked out into the hall she saw a "shadow" who resembled a man with long hair. It scared her even though she realized the man really wasn't there. I began to think about the two men who I saw watching the lady and realized our house was built exactly where they had been standing.

There is not a malevolent feeling about any of these spirits - but actually one of peace.

*Anonymous*

## **Burial Ground**

This area is rich in ancient Indian ruins. They are everywhere. Even with a short walk through the hills you can find many things. One in particular is a big burial ground that lies out beside the Navajo Dam Road. This burial ground now has a pipeline through it and a dirt road over it. Over the years progress has desecrated it. As more people move out into the hills and as the oil and gas fields increase in size, more and more ruins have been found and destroyed. As more are found, the BLM steps in and fences to help protect and preserve these old ruins. At this site I have seen many things such as pottery, broken ax ends, arrowheads and bones. There are many things out there but it is best left alone because it is an old burial ground and you would not want the cemetery that your family is in desecrated.

*Danny Vickers*

## **Fire at Night**

In 1996 three Aztec High School football players went up to Navajo Dam at night, driving around. They decided to go on a boat ride about midnight. They got in a big fight and one was thrown into the water. He swam to shore yelling and fussing at those in the boat. When he turned around to look at the two in the boat, he noticed their mouths were wide open and their faces were pale white. There was an older Navajo man in white, with deep wrinkles, a faint peppered beard and mustache standing on the shore behind the one who fell in. The man suddenly disappeared. When the two returned to shore, the only thing they saw was a still burning campfire and a wolf. Nothing more was around the area. The next morning there was no sense of even a fire in the area.

*Anonymous*

## **Pancho Villa Up North**

Back when Pancho Villa was raiding southern New Mexico, rumor had it that he came up here to stash all of his gold. Rumor also had it that it was hidden by some of his men in Hart's Canyon. My great-grandfather has been looking for the gold every spring and every fall, but no luck has come with the hunt for the gold.

*Anonymous*

## **Yangośś**

My grandpa told me this story. "One day I was just about to go to sleep. Some noises were disturbing me outside so I went to go check it out and nothing was there. When I went back inside, I heard that noise again. Then I grabbed the flashlight and ran outside and I saw something that did not look like a human as I shined the flashlight on it. It ran toward me and stopped in front of me. The only thing I saw was it's teeth; his face was like ... " (In Navajo beliefs I can't tell you what it looks like because it has the power to go into your dreams and later on come true.)"

*Anonymous*

## **Ella McCoy**

She was one of the first settlers in the area. Her descendents remember her as a beautiful lady, always dressed nicely and very loving and sweet. Her granddaughter, Henriella Jordan, talked about going to her house to get cookies. Mrs. McCoy always had sugar cookies, the best ever made, for her grandchildren after school. She used to make faces with raisins on top of the cookies for the children. They always stopped by Grandma's house to get the cookies whenever possible.

*Henriella Jordan*

## Hare Beans

When the railroad came into Aztec it provided a lot of new business. For one person, it was selling his beans. William Hare produced many beans to sell to many outside towns. The warehouse for the beans still stands today, and is still in possession of the Hares. The beans were greatly known and enjoyed. The Hare family still has the same generation of beans from the first bean crop. When the railroad left, so did the business. William retired and turned the warehouse into storage. Until this day the warehouse has possessions of William and every Hare alive and dead - five generations. It even has HARE painted on the top side. It's located on Lover's Lane.

*Brandon Hare*

## Trains and Trouble

A long time ago, when I was about nine years old, my grandparents lived on the New Mexico and Colorado state line. Well, when my grandparents were in their prime, my dad and all of his brothers lived there with them. When my dad would get bored and couldn't find a ride anywhere he and his brothers would walk 75 yards over to the train tracks. At about 9:00 in the morning and when the train went slow between farms, he would jump on and ride it to Farmington or Aztec for the day. After which he would get back on the train and head back. If he was lucky my grandpa wasn't looking for him to get off. But if he wasn't, my dad would get in trouble and have to work on the farm.

*Alex Hanhardt*

## The Longest Ride of My Life

Some of my friends were camping at a popular spot near Navajo Lake. While hiking, they came across a human skull, and thinking it was really neat, they took it home.

Sometime later the friend who had it at home, took the skull out of hiding and began messing around. The next day he totaled his car. Soon after, another friend came over and was playing with the skull; that very day he wrecked his truck. A third friend picked up the skull and shortly thereafter rolled her bronco and then a fourth friend wrecked someone else's truck after handling the skull.

We decided we had disturbed it's soul and needed to return the skull to it's original resting place before any more bad things happened.

Three of my friends and I drove out to the lake one evening. We placed the skull on the ground where it had been found and immediately there was a loud crash of thunder and it began pouring down rain. We ran for the car. The rain stopped as we drove away. The ride home seemed to go on forever, like slow motion, and we didn't see one car the whole way back. Needless to say, I was glad when I finally arrived back in Aztec.

*Stephanie Christensen*



## **Hotel In Aztec**

There is a hotel on Main Street in Aztec. It used to be called the American Hotel. It was built and in business in the early 1900's. Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Stone owned it and passed it down through five generations of family. A man staying there shot himself in that same hotel because he was under great pressure and distress. But visitors say that he is still there. Guests in the hotel say that they have seen a ghost or spirit in the shape of a man. And ever since then the American Hotel got the name that it was haunted.

*Rex Farnsworth*

## **Bones and Pots**

Just outside of Aztec, down a canyon, on a reservation, there is a place where the pottery is so thick they could walk across it. The arrowheads and half-bowls crushed under feet as they walked. When they were working they came across it. They down the canyon and it was all over; they couldn't avoid it. There were ruins on the sides, which hadn't been explored - late Anasazi probably. They saw a half-pot with a sun on it. There was a spear with the head still on it and a bunch of arrowheads. Where the Indians used to live in the buildings there were drawings like rock art. Many bones were lying around outside. The workers were very surprised because probably no one knew the ruins were there. Companies are to get permission to work. If the tribe had known, they probably would have gone somewhere else.

*Anonymous*

## The Spring of '88

It was during the spring of '88 the two came into my life. To leave them forever anonymous, they will be known only as Red Feather and Cloudy Sky. They were caught between two worlds, their traditional beliefs and my world of treasure hunting. They had seen some information about me in a magazine and heard I had a new long-range gold detector. Now the technology they wanted me to use on their story was questionable, but had indeed worked from time to time. It had *its* limitations. If the wind was blowing, it would turn the head of the instrument whatsoever direction it wanted and it was impossible to use. But away we went, riding in Red Feather's pick-up, off to dig up the hidden gold of the Spaniards.

The story went that some Spanish soldiers had been transporting a cache of gold coins up a canyon when attacked by some of the native inhabitants. All of the Spanish soldiers were killed and the gold was carefully hidden. The gold of the Spaniards had brought nothing but evil to the New World and must be hidden so that no more calamities and no more harm would befall the natives of the area. Now the story had some credible beginnings, and the name of the canyon they gave me was correct, but what made their story believable was their insistence that the canyon had been carefully hidden by switching the names of two canyons. Now I have been ready at the drop of a hat to pursue treasure in locations throughout the world, so off we went, to the canyon they insisted the gold lay buried in.

The pick-up complained about the rugged trail and the deep sands it was made to travel in, but the trail was indeed very old. This could possibly be the day I had waited for...

Perhaps this day the gold would be ours. Dreams of financial security and life of ease was discussed on the way, each of us planning what our share of the treasure would be used for. The pickup was brought to a halt at the head of a canyon and I was told we had arrived at the canyon of gold.

The hunt was on. A careful scan from above the canyon was made using the long-range locator and there was a very definite signal from down in the canyon. Carefully we made our way down the steep entrance, constantly checking to make sure the signal was still present. Indeed, it was one of the better signals that I had received with the instrument. The weather was a perfect spring day; the sun felt warm on our backs; the air was still. It was exactly what we needed for the instrument to work right. No wind to turn the head of the instrument and the temperature was just right to give us a strong signal. This was going to be the day we had all been waiting for. It was going to be a day of adventure, a day of gold.

The signal was holding very strong as we proceeded down the canyon and from behind me I heard the excited murmuring between my two newfound friends. Not wanting to be left out of the excitement, I asked the cause of the excited whispers. "It is a red-tail hawk", Cloudy Sky said, pointing to the bird that was circling behind me. "That is a sure sign of treasure," I was told. Now I had not hunted by signs of the birds before, but I could no more prove my technology than they could theirs, so I held my peace. But I think I walked just a little more confidently as I strode toward that signal coming from down the canyon. Surely, this treasure will be mine I thought...

We proceeded about sixty yards when suddenly I noticed that my two friends were running in the opposite direction. They had scattered, one running up each side of the canyon as fast as they could go. Seeing no imminent dangers, I yelled after them, "What is the matter?" "The whirlwind." Red Feather yelled back. There behind me, with no wind in the area, a dust devil had sprung up. There was no obvious source of wind so it did give rise to some questions in my mind. As I continued down the canyon, it seemed to follow me. When I went to the right, it went to the right. If I veered to the left, it was still immediately behind me. I continued for about 150 yards and stopped in the way, turning to face it. I was not sure how I would fight the wind, but I turned back to it and began to walk directly toward it. Suddenly the dust devil just disappeared. With fear and trepidation my two friends rejoined me in the canyon, but I noticed that each was glancing back over their shoulder from time to time. When quizzed they explained why they had run so suddenly. "It was turning counter clockwise." Cloudy Sky informed me. Right, I thought, now that is obvious, I guess they must have seen the questioning look on my face as they then proceeded to tell me that if the dust devil was turning counter-clockwise it was an evil spirit sent to protect the treasure. "Good," I thought, "then maybe they are right about the gold being here ." The hunt continued shortly, and then the wind began to blow in the canyon, but nowhere else. Now the machine I was using no longer functions when the wind blows. I suggested we try and wait the wind out and rest over to the side of the canyon. They readily agreed...

After a short while, Red Feather questioned as to whether it would be o.k. to perform one of their ceremonies to stop the wind. I was not a believer as they were, but it was their land, their story and their ceremony so I told them to just have at it. I sat back enjoying the now crisp April day and observed them as they went through their sing and smoke to stop the wind. After a few minutes of ceremony they joined me on the side of the hill awaiting the stopping of the wind. After about thirty minutes of silence with a continuing wind, I inquired of Red Feather as to whether he had ever performed this ceremony before. "Yes", came the terse reply. Ten minutes passed with no diminishing of the strength of the wind and again I queried my newfound friend with. "Did it work?" "Every time." was the quick retort. Another ten minutes passed slowly, no stopping of the force of the wind and I again worked up the courage to question Red Feather concerning his abilities. "How long do you think it will be before the wind stops?" I questioned. "Oh... maybe July", came the answer with a very quiet chuckle.

The treasure, if it is in the canyon, still lies there. When I left that day, somehow I believed that the wind was there to amuse my friends. What chance would I have?

*John A. Melacon*



## La Llorona

The story of La Llorona as it was told to me: Once in a little town in northern New Mexico there lived a beautiful girl who was stuck on herself. She believed that there was no one in her village good enough for her. Then one day a tall, dark and handsome Spanish man came into town and swept the young lady off her feet. They were married and had two children. One day the man left his wife. A few years later he returned, paying no attention to his wife and diverting it to his children. The young lady grew jealous and took her children late at night to the river and threw them in. When she realized what she had done she was horrified and started running down the riverbank crying for her children. She slipped on some wet grass, hit her head on a rock and died. She was buried in a beautiful white dress in the village graveyard. Although she was put to rest her spirit was not. She roams the rivers of New Mexico looking for her children. If you are not careful she may mistake you for her own and take you to rest with her.

*Curtis Hall*

## Aztec Revisited

In the early 50's, Aztec had three grocery stores, one school that all students went to, and a 5 & 10 store on Main Street. In the early 60's the train made two runs a day to Farmington, hauling things. There used to be many walkers up and down Main Street and block parties. In the late 60's and early 70's McCoy had 1-3, Park Avenue 4-6, Koogler 7-9 and AHS 10-12 grades. When my mom was little, the A&W was closer to outside Aztec and she used to go down and buy a float for a quarter. Before my mom was born, old western movies were made in Aztec and one of my family members was in one.

*Alexia Garcia • Told By: Dorthy Lemon, Kim Garcia*

## The Haunted Camper

Two years ago my friend, my brother and I went out camping a few miles from my house. About dusk my friend and my brother walked to a friend's house nearby and I went with them. They left first and I walked back alone in the dark. There was a big ditch I had forgotten about and I fell in it. I crawled back out and started walking again. It was kind of spooky.

When I got back, everybody was inside and I went over to the side of the camper and rocked it. Eric and my brother screamed. I laughed and went inside where they were covered with blankets. I said, "What are you doing?" They said, "There is something out there." My brother looked out the window and saw an owl fly towards the window and then up over the camper.

I said, "There's nothing out there." And we argued for awhile until I saw the fire blow out and felt the camper get rocked again. Then we went outside with a 22 rifle. We saw two different kinds of footprints. One was a shoe print and one was a dog print. We went back inside and soon heard another noise. I went out and chased it off. About ten minutes later, something hit the side of my camper hard. We packed up and went home. I was driving so fast I almost rolled the camper. When we got there we camped in my front yard for the rest of the night.

I think the camper is haunted because every time I went camping in it, something bad happened. I still have the camper, but I don't use it anymore.

*Anonymous*

## Lost Horseshoe Mine

One time I hiked up La Palata Canyon. I went with my friend, John. He knew the area quite well. We wandered blindly up a canyon which eventually led to a caved-in mine. La Palata Canyon is filled with old mines so this one was no surprise. John and I immediately looked for gold around the mine. We found one particular shiny rock and took it back to camp. Upon returning to Farmington, we took the rock to the coin shop. The man there identified gold, silver, platinum and copper all within the same rock. He mentioned that the rock may have come from the Lost Horseshoe Mine. He said the miners from there were killed by an angry bear. John and I returned to the mine. While searching for a mine claim we noticed many fresh bear prints and decided to delay our mining career.

*Allen Elmore*

## Garlic

Back in the old red brick high school building was a basement with the gym and classrooms. There were two stories above that. People who knew just how to jiggle the door knobs could make them come unlocked.

One time, after entering, they took and smashed garlic all over the stairs. Guess who had the job of cleaning up - the same custodian who had to clean the cow mess.

*Cleofas Montoya*



## The Ghost of Sonic

I was only working a couple of weeks. The job should not have gotten to me, but it did. I was having an ordinary night, cooking burgers. I went to go get some cheese for the burgers. While I was standing there, I caught something out of the corner of my eye. When I looked up, a young business man looking like he walked straight in from the fifties walked by. I figured he came in the back door. He looked my way, gave a smile, walked out of Sonic and disappeared. I turned to Ron and asked him to go look up front, but all he could see was nothing.

*Anonymous*

## Cox Canyon

Up north of Aztec about four miles, in what is now Cox Canyon, was land once owned by cattleman, Ike Cox. Having free run of the canyon, Cox's cattle grew fat on the green grass and watered well on the Animas. Cox was happy with the setup and made headquarters in the canyon. Little did he know that trouble was fixing to hit. Soon after his arrival came the sheep men and with them little white animals. Cattle started getting narrow through their hind quarters just like Ike's pocketbook. When told to light a shuck for new territory, the sheepherders began to get hostile quick. Well gun wages were being paid. Then and now he that ties his gun down doesn't do much talking with his mouth. Men started getting their diet for lead soaked up mighty quick. But because of the law in the territory, Cox was arrested and sent to prison for two years, just long enough for his land to be used for grazing sheep and ruined for cattle. Cox rattled his hocks to Oregon where he would die in Eugene of old age. All that is left of his home in the canyon is his name.

*Justin Beasley*

## Pipeline Living

In 1930 Jess decided he was going to go to Aztec for me to meet his family. They didn't know what I looked like either. We had given up our apartment in Salt Lake City and all our worldly possessions were in the back end of a Model-T Ford. We had a different car but Jess said he didn't know how to work on the other car but he could work on a Model-T. Didn't bother me any, but riding down in a Model-T was something else. The day after Mother's Day, Jess and I left for Aztec. We left Salt Lake early. We used twenty-three and a half gallons of gas and one quart of oil - and it cost \$8.47 to make the trip. It took twenty hours. After getting here I met all his folks.

We stayed with his sister, Elsie, a few nights and then we went out and stayed with Grandpa. Jess got a job on the pipeline. They were going from Aztec to Albuquerque. He bought a tent and a stove so he could follow the pipeline. It wasn't bad; we got along fine. We had to go to Cabezon Peak. They had an Indian Trading Post there - Mr. Smith's. He said we could park any place we wanted to; it didn't matter to him. But we had it up only a few days and right by there was a big arroyo this deep, deep ditch. One night it rained and I heard this terrible noise and I didn't know what it was. I asked Jess and he said it was the Sand Arroyo running. That's what they called this big, long ditch. I got up, stepped out into a foot of water that had come into our tent. The water was going pell-mell. Twelve o'clock at night and it was just like big ocean waves. The next morning when I went out and looked; you couldn't even tell there was water except in the real low, low places.

While we were still out there we heard an awful noise. I didn't know what it was either so I asked Jess and he said it was the wild jackasses braying. I didn't see them but they made a lot of noise.

*Sara Dusenbery - Told By: Gertrude Dusenbery*

## Claw Marks

There is an old legend of a shape-shifting being, called a Skinwalker. Although I have never seen one, it is part of our culture. I've heard a story that made me believe. A young Indian friend of mine said to me that one night they were out in the hills near Aztec shooting prairie dogs. A man with the head of a wolf and claws of a bear came running along the side of the truck. They were terrified and started to speed up. They were up to eighty mph and the thing was still running next to them. It reached out with its hand and clawed the side of the truck and disappeared. They didn't believe it had happened at first because they had been so scared. Until the next day, he woke up and saw claw marks ripped in the side of the truck.

*Curtis Hall*

## The Red and White House

There is this red and white house which was supposedly built long ago on an Indian burial ground. We moved out of Farmington when I was about five years old. We bought this red and white house. Everything was fine till about three weeks later. Weird things started to happen; first there were noises like somebody was walking through the house at night. Next, when I was alone I always felt a presence like someone else was there.

One night I was laying on the couch watching TV and playing a game. I decided it was late and time to go the sleep. I was almost in dreamland when I felt someone breathing on my neck. No one was home and I just froze. After about a half an hour it stopped and I just hid under my blankets and fell asleep. That was one of the last times I slept at home by myself.

*Donnie Schwisher*

## **The Red and White House- Part II**

Before my friend, Donnie, bought the house from my family we used to live there. We had numerous experiences in the house. One time my grandmother was cooking and a mechanical can opener flew off the counter from behind her. She stepped to the side to get something from a cupboard and the can opener barely missed her, crashed into the wall hard enough to break the can opener.

Another time my uncle thought he saw his grandmother, who had been deceased for years, sitting at the foot of his bed. When she turned to face him, she had red glowing eyes and then disappeared. Needless to say, it wasn't his grandmother.

Many other experiences involved moving objects like the first. Today the house has been remodeled and resold. I'm waiting to see if our new neighbors have any problems.

*B.J. Howard*

## **The Ghost Goat**

One day we were walking out in the hills near Flora Vista. It was around dusk. My friend and I got this feeling something was watching us, so we turned around. There was a creature with a goat-head, about as tall as us. We couldn't move and we stared at it. We blinked and it was gone. We felt very uncomfortable. We turned around and were back at his house without walking there. It has happened more than once. The same night after dark it happened again. It stared at us and then it turned it's head to look at us like a regular goat would turn it's head to look at a human. There was no noise. His color was opaque, almost see-through but not quite. It happens near a natural place where nothing grows. There is a circle of sand and sometimes people go to hold ceremonies there.

*Anonymous*

## **The Porch**

The air was misty and cold. A middle-aged man stood out on the porch of a hotel smoking his pipe and admiring the view. He had a strange feeling something was going to happen. He thought he heard footsteps by the side of the building but when he looked nothing was there. He figured it was the wind. He kept hearing the sounds getting closer but still saw nothing. He got cold and turned to go in. As he turned he saw a man dressed in a black hat and trench coat. The man had a knife in his hand. He did not know this person. But he saw the large hands and eyes and without a word exchanged, the man stabbed him. The whole town was filled with blood piercing screams. Since then people still feel this middle-aged man on the porch, like a hawk watching the hotel and protecting its occupants.

*Anonymous*

## **The Mystery Light**

About 1975 my grandparents used to come to Durango, their home town, from Tucson every month or two. One night my grandparents, two aunts, uncle and my mom were on their way to Durango. When they reached Gallup my grandma saw a bright light. She asked my grandpa what it was. Everybody else was asleep so they did not see the light. It bounced around, went forward then backwards and side to side. It did that until they got to Bondad Hill; it was a good three hours. When they got to the top of Bondad Hill the light shot away and they never saw it again. They never said too much about what they saw. Back then people would think you were crazy if you saw something like that. They finally are talking about it.

*Anonymous*

## The Coco Man

As long as I could remember my parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents have told me to beware of the Coco Man. The Coco Man is told to be a mythical little man sent out to get misbehaving children. Every time I started to do something wrong they would call to the Coco. "Coco Man, come get Curtis," they would say. I used to get so scared and start to cry. After a few years, I became aware there was no Coco Man. Then one day I said, "Call the Coco Man, I don't care." So they did, and that night when I went to bed there was a knock at my window. I was too scared to see who it was. To this day I don't know whether it was my parents trying to scare me or if it was the inevitable Coco Man.

*Curtis Hall*



## **The Spanish Armor**

It's up on a towering mountain outside of Aztec. On a warm summer day, I was driving around when I found a rock that looked like a French's Mustard jar. So I started to walk around exploring when I found a large indentation in the cliff face. In the corner there was a small hole. So I went back to the truck and got a flashlight and started to look. As I walked inside, it seemed that the walls were getting smaller. After a while, the walls opened up and it looked like a mine. I walked a little further and the cave forked; I went to the right and later after about twenty feet there was a carving in the wall of the Conquistadors with Spanish writing below it. There was a bunch of armor, head armor for a horse, broken pieces of swords, helmets, breast plates, leaning up against the walls of the cave. I decided to go back home so I could get a video camera. A few days later I came back and there were mountain lion tracks leading in and out of the cave so I decided not to investigate any longer and I haven't been back since.

*Mike Fauteaux*

## **The Spanish Armor - 1997**

My friend and I did go back last December. When we found the cave, there was a little stream coming out of the opening from all the rain we had this year. Disappointed, we started exploring up and around the cave entrance. Behind the cave, carved on a boulder my friend found a cross and the date 1745.

*Mike Fauteaux  
Danny Vickers*

## Outhouse

Back in the 1940's there were still quite a few outhouses in Aztec. Halloween was a great time for tipping them over or moving them part way from the hole.

One Halloween, some young men were in the process of moving one and it must have been moved too far. One of the young men fell in - what a mess. Next day everyone at school heard about it. How embarrassing.

*Cleofas Montoya*

## How Times Have Changed

Growing up in Animas City, Colorado, now called North Durango, was so different from today's world.

While parents watched from porches all the neighbor children played games; rover red rover, hide and seek; tug of war, were just a few enjoyed by all.

Saturday morning we would all walk to downtown Durango, to see the Saturday morning matinee. With a dime we could see a movie, new's reels, cartoons plus popcorn. What a deal.

Best of all, we didn't have to fear strangers. In a small town, all were neighbors and helped watch out for each other's children.

*Rick Lee - Told By: Patsy Parker*



## The Big Flood

When I was in fifth or sixth grade, Aztec had a1 big flood from the run off and a large rain cloud. The waters ran over bridges and ran down roads about a foot or more deep. The unloading bays in the back of Aztec High School were like a small personal pool until the water evaporated. The floors were soaked because of the high water level. The Animas ran fast and furious for months with dark brown, muddy water. The arroyos ran fast and furious too. The rain filled the ditches and made them run over. The waters of one wash ran so high, it filled our orchard with two feet of water. In one wash near Aztec, the water ran so high and so fast it moved six large cottonwood stumps, at least six feet in diameter, 300 yards downstream. The water also moved large trash dumpsters down the road, into parked cars or some ran into houses. Since then, we have never had another big flood.

*Danny Vickers  
Robert Lydic*

## The Fish

There is a myth that has been told ever since I can remember. It is of the giant catfish in Morgan Lake. I was told that three divers went down there at the outlet in Morgan Lake and only two of them came up due to a catfish the length of five full grown men. It munches people. Ever since, most divers are too scared to go down there. It is too big to catch. People have tried with snagging hooks and spear-guns, but no one can catch it.

*Calvin Hartle*

## Walking In the Rain

There was a young girl who was walking home in the rain. She caught a ride with a guy. Later, she was missing and found on the side of the road, dead. She was murdered.

One night a man was driving on that road and saw a girl walking in the rain. He pulled over beside her and asked if she needed a ride. She was cold and wet and he gave her his jacket to wear. They got to her house and she got out with his jacket. The next day he went back to get it. He knocked at the door and asked the old man, who opened the door, if his daughter was home. "No, she passed away a long time ago." The man said, "That's impossible, I gave her a ride last night and I left my jacket with her. Now I'm here to pick it up." The old man thought he was crazy. So he took him to his daughter's grave. She was buried in a hogan not far from his house. They unlocked the door and his jacket was on top of her grave. On a rainy night people see her walking home on the very same road.

*Anonymous*

## All- American Town

Back in the early 1960's, Aztec didn't have enough money from taxes to make a paved road from Aztec to Navajo Dam. Then the whole community of Aztec pitched in and paid for the materials that were needed to develop the road as well as the labor. It wasn't noticed by the rest of the world until finished, that Aztec was the All-American Town of 1963 for building and constructing the Navajo Dam Road. The road has not needed paving, only patched up and painted since 1963. The cost of the road was around one million dollars if the town had to pay to have it built.

*Robert Lydic*

## **The Appearance**

When Uncle Michael was eighteen, he went to a party in the hills just outside of Aztec. A fight was started and my uncle was killed. They beat him with a rock over and over until he was no longer moving. This all took place about twenty years ago. Two years ago on the night he was killed, he appeared at the foot of my mom's bed and held a conversation with her for about an hour. At the end of their talk he told her that he was going to see their mother, (my grandmother). A couple of hours later my grandma called crying saying she saw him. My mom just shrugged and said, "I know," and she got tears in her eyes.

*Curtis Hall*

## **Navajo Dam Road 1962-1963**

Aztec needed a moral and financial boost, so the city fathers and mothers, among them, Cap and Bonnie Walls, started the movement for a road to be built from Highway 550 on the north side of Aztec to the east - directly to Navajo Dam. We were talking virgin land. Aztec wanted to do this without government intervention or money. Now how to do that? Cap and Bonnie spearheaded the organization of it calling on people who follow their direction. They got on the phone and started asking for all kinds of help, from preparation and serving food to the actual cut out and building of the road. Everything, time, equipment, supplies, labor almost all donated. My regret is that I did not keep written records of all those who donated and helped. We were secure in the knowledge of not having any one seriously hurt. Everyone who could, helped, in anyway they could. It was remarkable how you could go out everyday and see the puzzle being done and put together, from cutting through hills to the laying of asphalt. Bonnie Walls has a large memorial out cropping, dedicated to her memory for being the root of this big community effort.

*Dale Townley*

## The Bar Flume

The bar flume is off Highway 550 by Dutchman's Hill, north of Aztec. The old highway bridge is there next to an irrigation pipe that takes the water across the river. The old story goes that section of river is haunted by the spirit of a woman. It is said that she threw her children off the bridge. She had a second thought afterwards and jumped in after them. It was said that she was too late and her two kids drowned in the cold waters of the Animas. I do not know if this story is true or not, but she died with deep regret for killing her children. Now her spirit supposedly haunts that section of the Animas calling for her children.

*Danny Vickers*

## Hank

A long time ago, in a cabin on Mt. Neboe near Cedar Hill, a man named Hank lived all alone. He would make his living by trapping beavers, wolves and other rodents and selling their skins. Once a month Hank would load the skins on his trusty mule and go into town. It was December seventeenth and Hank was getting ready to go into town. On his way there it started to snow very badly and his sure-footed mule slid and lost his balance. Hank fell all the way to the bottom of Mt. Neboe and died on impact. Till this day they say at 8:45 p.m. every December seventeenth, you can still hear Hank scream by the mountain.

*Ryan Daily*

## The Spirit of the Hills

I know of a spot called The Caves out on the old La Plata Highway. If you are not watching, it can be kind of spooky. Two friends and I went camping out there not long ago. We were just sitting around the fire talking when we heard something in the bushes. We made the fire bigger but the noise was still there.

My friend, Rueben, threw something at where the noise was coming from. It moved back and we ignored it until it got closer again. Then we jumped up, took a knife and a stick and went out to see what it was. Looking, we did not see anything, we turned around and went back to camp. The noise followed us so we turned around and went back towards it. We couldn't find anything so we decided to go somewhere else for the rest of the night.

On the way back to the highway, I was in front, my friends were behind in Rueben's truck. They started to go faster, passed me and I couldn't figure out why. I got stuck in a wash and when they came back to help me they told me why. Rueben had seen an old dark man in a black hat and black trench coat kneeling down. It took awhile to get my truck out and we began to hear the noises again. We got out of there as quick as we could and went straight back home. It was later the next morning when I told my mom and she did not believe us. But Ruben knows who he saw and we all know what we heard.

*Anonymous*

## Basin Motors

Back in 1932, the Rhodes brothers bought an old gas station garage on East Main and Zia. The brothers were Floyd and Maurice. They sold mostly Dodge, Plymouth, and Chrysler until 1930; then they sold international. Well, there was a man in town who owned an old Model T. The man was having trouble with it; the man never came in to order a carburetor but my uncle ordered one for him. Then one day the gentlemen came in and asked to order a carburetor when my great-great-uncle reached back and pulled a carburetor off the shelf and said, "I knew you needed one of these."

Thanks to this business, four generations of mechanics have lived in Aztec. The Basin Motors Shop had friendly and reliable work in town. My great-grandfather never cheated anybody in his whole life. He never charged a family he knew was struggling.

Through the years Basin Motors has changed from Basin Motors to Aztec Motors, then in the 70's it changed to Aztec Wrecker. Until the late 80's, my father, Randy Lydic, worked there as a mechanic and as a wrecker driver. That was the shop I was raised in. To pass by my great-grandfather's shop brings back memories of all the wrecker runs and sitting in the wrecker honking the horn and shilling the gears.

*Robert Lydic*

## **It Went Bump in the Night**

One night last summer some friends and I were out at this place called Heavens Door. It got late and we decided to leave. As we were driving we heard something underneath the tires. We stopped and looked underneath the car. There was nothing. We started on again and heard the bump again. We looked and again there was nothing. It started to get scary. So we went on and the bump happened again and then the car died. We were really scared but got out anyway. When we stepped out of the car, we saw a movement in the bushes and heard a high screeching laughter, then it was gone and the car restarted.

*Curtis Hall*

## **Devils Gap**

When my grandma was a young girl, she lived in Cedar Hill. There were a group of hills that you could see and walk to. In one of the hills there was a huge crevice. It looked like a gap in a comb. All the children were told that the Devil had come up and taken a chunk out of the hill. She said that they were told this to make them behave. When they were older they would walk up to the gap and some of them found arrowheads, but she never found anything else up there.

*Anonymous*

## **The Light at Gobenador**

There is a light that sometimes shines out at Gobenador late at night I have always wondered what it was but could never figure it out. I have seen it usually in the area around Manzanares. It is very strange for it to be there because there are no houses or compressor stations. No reason that I can see for it to be there. Even people who have talked about it don't know why it shines out there. I would like to have a good explanation for the mysterious light, but nobody knows.

*Danny Vickers*

## **The Tracks**

When my mom was little, she lived right outside of Aztec near the old train tracks. She and her friends would put their cars to the rail and if the train was coming they would put a penny on the track, wait for the train to go by and then go searching for their flattened penny.

*Alexia Garcia*



## Gunfight at Angel Peak

For some time I'd heard of the gunfight at Angel Peak. I had been sitting at the sale barn, listening to the talk and gossip of the local cattlemen, when one of those old guys takes to telling of the gun fight at Angel Peak. The usual story was told of how the outlaws had stolen horses in Mancos, gunned down a sheep herder in Cedar Hill and drove them to Angel Peak where a posse attacked them that morning. Something inside me clicked and I wondered just where the battle was so I could take out a metal detector and try to scout out the place. I started asking questions from old tuners and could only get sketchy details about the peak being west and a hill here and a rock there. So I started piecing together an idea of the location. I got maps of the area and started studying when I wasn't doing anything else and I have a feeling as to the location being on the southeast of the peak in a little dish in the desert. I will soon be scouting the area and if fruitful, the area will be searched. Until then we will never know.

*Justin Beasley*



## **The Mormons In Aztec**

When the Mormons first got here they settled in Kirtland. Most of them came from Arizona and the upper part of Mexico. When they first got here their houses were burned and the people were killed. They weren't welcome and other people showed their hatred. The Mormons thought of leaving, but stayed and taught the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They then spread out to Farmington and then to Aztec and Bloomfield. They worked as blacksmiths and farmers. They not only grew their own food, but sold it as well. My family came from Byron Farnsworth. My great-grandpa lived in Mesa, Arizona. His daughter, Kathy, came here and stayed in Kirtland. My grandfather's family moved to Aztec when he was a small boy and my mother has lived here all of her life. We are now welcome and not bothered by society the way we used to be. We are now welcome to walk and talk free within society here in Aztec.

*Rex Farnsworth*

## **Last Chance**

My grand-dad told me of a place in Hart Canyon called Last Chance. Last Chance was a spring in a huge cave. It got its name for being the last chance to get water for cattle when moving from Aztec to a ranch in southern Colorado. He told me stories of camping there many nights. One of the stories was he and a few men were on a cattle run. They stopped at Last Chance to camp. He opened the sleeping roll and cooked some dinner. As bedtime rolled around, his buddies went to crawl into their beds. Luckily, my grandpa noticed a rattlesnake in his bed. They shook him out, shot him, and cooked him for breakfast the next morning.

*Jeremy McClain*

## Tent Fire

There in the tent I had the stove filled up and had a tub outside to put water in when we wanted to use it. I put the tub on the heating stove. I went out in the hills and was coming back real slow, looking around for rattlesnakes. That was the time of the year they shed their skin and didn't rattle. If one of them hadn't rattled I'd a walked right into it. It was the color of the dirt. I looked and a snake was just about six feet in front of me, all curled up and his head up, rattling his tail.

I was so scared I ran so dang fast the rest of the way thinking he'd come after me. I saw the tent was on fire. I ran in and used all the water and put the fire out. Up at the top where the pipe went out I put the fire out. When Jess came there was a little window that had a flap and he cut it off. It was just enough to go around the hole that was burnt. We had the tent fixed and stitched before we left. I've lived long enough to wonder how come I was so lucky to have a tent left. Now I realized that snake was there and scared the devil out of me and I ran as fast as I could and that's the only reason the tent was saved.

After we got back, we had our stuff piled on an old Ford, sort of pick-up. Made it back to Aztec before dark, put the tent up in the back yard, across the ditch from where the folks lived. Grandpa said there was no need goin' to town and spending our money for rent.

*Sara Dusenbery - Told By: Gertrude Dusenbery*

## The Boarded Up Room

"Hee, Hee, Hee." That is the giggle of a young, trusting Aztec girl who tried to help a tourist. Aztec was a small town and they trusted everyone around. A kind business man came to town for a meeting. He saw the girl at a local park and asked her to help him find a place to stay. She eagerly agreed. She led him to the local hotel and he checked in. They introduced each other and she offered to help him carry his bags. When up in the room he asked her about the town. When she was telling him the history, he began to lock the door and windows. She grew very tense and scared and she jumped up, "I have to go sir, it is lunch time." He grabbed a knife out of his bag and raised it to her. She was very frightened and didn't know what to do. She screamed for help, then she screamed pain and death. He stabbed the innocent girl and got his stuff together and left the girl to die. He left town. The hotel owner went to the room. She saw the girl and screamed. Even though they had a proper burial, the girl's spirit is still in the same room and she is still screaming for help. Many people went to the hotel years after and heard her and could hear banging. The people who stayed in the room could see the girl. She still asks for help. The people told the owner what they heard and saw. These people have never heard the story before. This room is now boarded up and we pray this girl can soon find peace and finally lay to rest.

*Anonymous*

## Footprints

One summer I was visiting my dad and we went to the corn field to work on it. When it was dark, we went home and when we got there we noticed someone standing at our window. When he noticed us coming he ran, but it was too dark to see where he went. We got out of the vehicle and looked around by the window. We found foot prints. So, we followed them behind our wooden fence and it suddenly changed into deer prints. Our family had a prayer done for us. Ever since then we never saw it again.

*Anonymous*

## Rincon Theater - 1957

My husband had been steam scalded in an oil patch accident and we were not too sure how secure our job was. So I decided to find a job, in order to be secure. However, I had two young sons, and the market for women workers in this area was very slim. So I went to work at the Rincon Drive-In, frying hamburgers and cooking. It was really cold that fall and winter. The first person I met was a young man, twelve to fourteen years of age. He was cleaning windshields for tips, then later was promoted to ticket taker. I really liked this young man and sent him hamburgers and hot cocoa. As the years went by we became good friends. This determined young man, is now one of the City Commissioners. This is Jerry Hanhardt. He is still a pleasure to know.

*Dale Townley*

## Gold Canyon

My dad once told me that back in the 1880's there was a group of bandits who robbed the Silverton train and stole a million dollars in gold bars and rode off. A few days later four of the five guys were killed by the United States Cavalry out by Gobenador Wash. But the fifth guy was chased to what is now La Jara Canyon. Before he was killed he stood on top of the saddle on his horse and slid the box of gold into one of the holes in the side of a cliff. And to this day they still have not found the gold.

*Michael Fauteaux - Told by: Scott Conrad*

## The Owl

There is an old Native myth around Aztec stating that if you hear an owl hoot outside your window three nights in a row you would die. A young boy after hearing this story went to bed very scared. That night went by as did the following but the third night he heard an owl hoot. His heart started racing but when he heard it again he couldn't but be startled and he jumped up and screamed for his parents. His mother reassuring him it was just one night, calmed him and he fell asleep. The next night he heard another owl and couldn't go back to sleep. He stayed awake all night and had a hard day. He couldn't seem to sleep that night either. He was breaking sweats and crying. The young boy hadn't heard anything yet that night. But just before midnight he heard the owl once more, so terrified he screamed and his mother came in. He told her what had happened and she grew hysterical. The next day they were very cautious but the young boy died in his sleep that night.

*Anonymous*

## **Animas River Adventure**

One summer the Animas River was really high. My grandpa was helping his dad with outside work. They were plowing fields and working on the tractor. It had just rained so it was pretty muddy. My grandpa was just about eleven or twelve years old then.

They were backing up on the field towards the river, when suddenly the back wheels slipped over the hill into the river. My grandpa fell off the tractor into the river with the back end of the tractor. He then got caught in the trees and was swept underwater by the fast current of the high river.

My great-grandpa looked and looked for him, but couldn't get to him at all. My great-grandpa was getting pretty worried when my grandpa's head popped up, gasping for air. He was under there for a long time. My great-grandpa was sure he was dead. As a boy, my grandpa didn't go back to the river for quite a while even though it was his and his friends' favorite place to play during the summer.

*Lisa McCoy*

## **That Old Dog**

I heard a story about Skinwalkers along Southside Road. One night, sometime last year in the summertime, my friends were driving on that road and they saw an old dog. They turned around to look at it and noticed that the dog had changed into an old man. He was walking along the road and he had a long beard and a cane. After my friends saw him, they freaked out and drove off very fast.

*Anonymous*

## Ghost - A.H.S.

Since I first joined Playmakers, I have heard several stories and rumors about the ghost, who supposedly haunts the multi-purpose building at Aztec High School. I've heard strange things have happened there late at night after an evening rehearsal or a show. You see, after everyone leaves there are usually a few things left to be done, such as, putting away props, costumes, make-up, turning off lights and locking up all the windows and doors. One time I stayed a little later to help the teacher clean up and it was kind of spooky.

But, I still swear to this day that while behind the curtain in the dark, I distinctly felt someone breathing on the back of my neck. I quickly whipped my head around to see who the prankster was, but there was nobody there. "What about a breeze?" you might ask, but this was inside a building with all the doors and windows shut. After this experience I wanted to learn more about the ghost. So I asked around and it turns out that others in class had similar experiences; objects have been moved; lights have turned off and on; flats have been tom. I guess I'll never know if there really is a ghost in the multipurpose building, but I prefer it that way.

*Tessa Chavez*



## Winter

When I was small, in the 40's in Aztec, it used to snow a lot. The first snow we were not supposed to eat any because it was dirty from whatever was up in the air. After that we would take a big bowl and mix snow, sugar, vanilla and a very small amount of cream or canned milk. What a treat, "homemade" ice cream. The neighborhood children would gather behind our house and make a big circle, flatten the snow in o pie shape with another smaller circle in the middle, to play fox and geese. The middle circle was the safe zone. If you were tagged elsewhere in the circle then it was your turn to be the fox. After all the running, yelling and laughing, we would find another area of untouched snow and lie in the snow making "snow angels."

*Cleofas Montoya*

## The Old Cottonwood

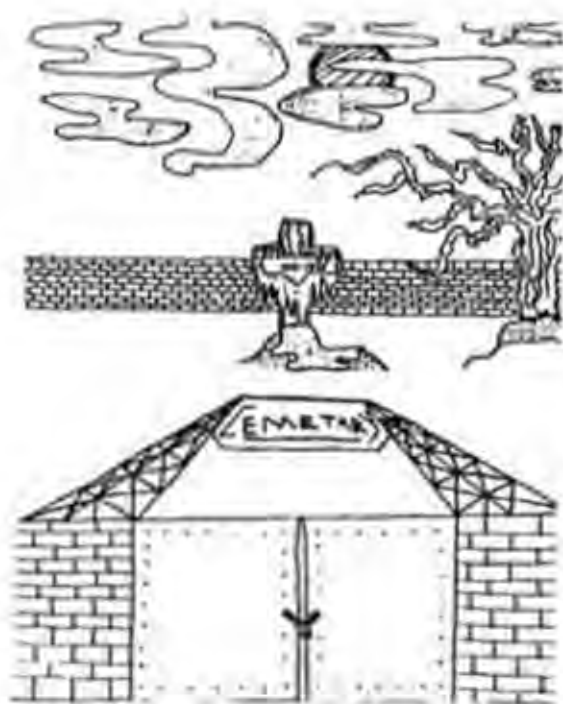
There used to be an old cottonwood tree on one end of town in Aztec. This cottonwood had a hole in which people of Aztec would place food and money for a homeless man. The man never went hungry and always had a little money to buy food or whatever he needed. The caring people of old Aztec would always make sure the man was cared for. They would even make sure he saw the doctor. They would pick him up on the road and take him where he wanted to go. This shows how caring the people of Aztec were. When winter came, the man was taken into a home to be sheltered from the cold and snow. If the man was not taken in for a night, he would always have a warm blanket left for him in the tree.

*Danny Vickers*

## The Girl

At my old school, a teacher of mine told the class a story about the La Plata Highway. He said that a girl was being abducted one night by a few guys. She struggled and got away from the guys and made it to the La Plata Highway. She was waving cars down frantically and no one would stop. The boys finally caught up to her and killed her in the woods. Now they say if you're driving on La Plata Highway late at night, and see a girl waving, pick her up, because if you don't, rumor has it you will get in a wreck or something bad will happen. When you pick her up she will sit in your car, not saying a word, then disappear about a mile down the road after you let her out.

*Curtis Hall*



## The Moke House

This little adventure started in mid-December, 1956. It involved my brother-in-law, two friends we were going to help, and myself.

The two friends, James and Johnny, had a private uranium claim on a small stream called Indian Creek, near the Colorado River. This stream is located northwest of Aztec above Montecello, Utah and about the same distance, I think, southwest of Moab, Utah.

Anyway, we took our pickups down there to haul back the camp and prospecting equipment for James and Johnny. They were abandoning their uranium claim as it was the end of the uranium boom in that area and they were moving everything out. We left Dove Creek, Colorado in the afternoon and got to the camp at midnight. On our way back out the next day, we had only gone a few miles when we went into a small grassy valley surrounded by small rock cliffs - except to the south. There was a very high overhanging cliff on that side, a right pretty place, too.

Just as we emerged from the cut into the valley, James stopped our caravan to show us something. That something turned out to be some well-preserved Moke Indian ruins. Anyway, what I saw was. He pointed out this high cliff about a half a mile or so away and also pointed out several square "windows" in a row about half way up. A real mystery there because there was no way up or down to these windows. Looking through our field glasses, it was plain these windows were manmade, but how did they get there? Both James and Johnny said they'd thoroughly explored this cliff and Johnny had gone down on a rope and tried to swing into one of the windows. He was so far out he could only get within about ten feet of the window. The room behind the window appeared empty. By this time it was getting late so they abandoned their efforts...

## The Moke House - cont.

Then James asked, "Would you like to see one of these Moke houses up close?" Of course we said yes. So he led us a few steps and pointed to a small doorway at ground level where a small indentation had been walled in. Wow - it was in perfect condition. To get into it we had to sit down and back in to the room. It was about five by eight feet and about four and a half feet high. There were two or three very small corncobs over in one corner but nothing else.

We did not disturb anything in there. We left it just as we found it. Didn't have a camera with us, so we have no proof of this visit either, other than our memories. Oh, yes another very interesting thing about this house was that there were the full hand prints of the builder in the clay mud with which he had mortared in the rocks and clods from the door to the outer wall. The hand prints were about the size of a four-year old child's.

*Jim Green*



## Ghost in Aztec

Back in the 20's the courthouse was the county jail and there was a convict who escaped. The escape route went right on through my property. The man was shot on site in the middle of my property. In 1987, I stayed up watching TV on Thanksgiving break, when light appeared in my driveway. I was scared out of my seat because I didn't know what was going on. I went to check it out. There were people down the road with hound dogs barking and yelling as they found him. When they caught him he was in the center of my driveway and before they shot him, he looked straight into my eye and I felt cold. Now every Thanksgiving around 1:00 a.m. he is shot in my driveway. I did some research and there was a guy who was shot on my property years ago. He never had a name that I could find and he wasn't from here, until now.

*Anonymous*

## Church

Until I was ten years old, there was not a Catholic Church in Aztec. Occasionally, they would have mass at a local mortuary. Many times I went to the Baptist Church with our neighbor.

When Christmas came my brothers, sisters and I would go to all the different churches: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, to their Christmas programs. We would get bags of candies, apples and oranges. What a treat, for candy and oranges were things we didn't get very often. At the same time it was always exciting to see the Christmas plays and sing Christmas carols.

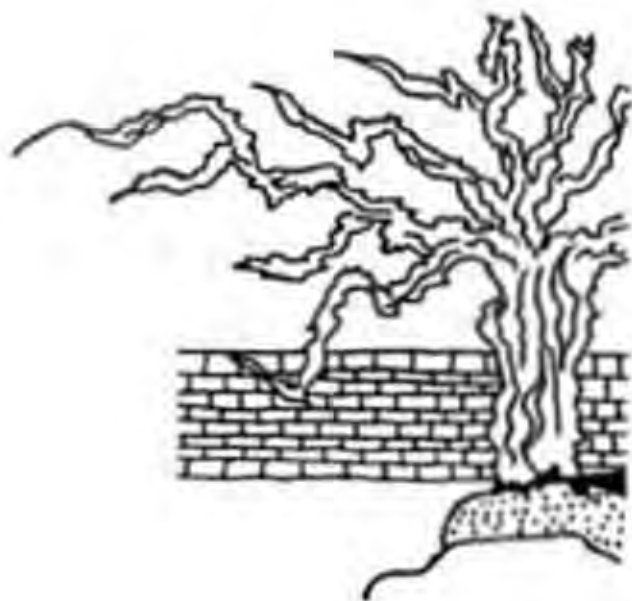
When our church was built and we had a choir, we would go Christmas caroling and then we would go to midnight mass. Christmas has always been a big part of my life. It is such a joyous time in Aztec.

*Cleofas Montoya*

## The Road

On the road out to the motor cross, three girls set out for a night of hill hopping, on a road where they shouldn't have been, on a night that was unusually dark, with doors locked and time to waste. It would be fun for all of them until they heard the car, or was it a dirt bike? What it was they're still not sure. But we do know that if it was truly there the people who were in it would have died, for we would have hit them. But when we turned around to see if they were okay, there was no one. There were only skid marks. We walked around trying to find someone or something. All we saw was a dog run past us. We jumped in the truck and left as fast as we could and haven't been back since.

*Anonymous*



## The Famous UFO - Unknown by Most

There has been a large volume written on Aztec's famous UFO, as well as smaller articles. The problem is, locally, no one can or will talk about it. The closest witness was a farmer near Blanco, who is now untraceable.

It all was supposed to have happened between the end of March to the end of May, 1948, just a year after the "Roswell Incident." A large circular ship appeared to be having trouble with control and crashed in Hart Canyon. This is a rugged area with only a good weather road into it about seven miles and then it is tracks on the grass and four-wheel drive.

The site has been identified just past the seven mile mark. From the vehicle, people can walk to the area to the bottom of the canyon. There are high rocky cliffs on each side. But where the earth is scorched, still black after fifty years, the entire circle has no bushes or grass except for one tiny shrub right in the middle. Around the sides of the circle the cedar and sage survived. But the old cedar trees are all bent in the same direction as if a terrific blast of air permanently deformed them. They are all scorched in the older growth areas, too. Rocks are everywhere except on the ground area within the circle. The natural gas wells found nearby do not damage the environment like this or for so long...

## **The Famous UFO - cont.**

Since the government had just gone through Roswell the year before, they were more alert to what happened here. Evidently, as soon as the military was notified, they drove here with the greatest speed. The entrance to Hart Canyon is 4.5 miles outside of North Aztec. It had a narrow one lane road bordered by arroyos and hills. The army quickly closed the road and went to work.

People were sworn to secrecy and to this day no one has come forward officially with the story of what actually was found. There were remains which the military loaded on oil rig trucks and covered with tarps. Instead of coming back out the entrance to Hart Canyon and driving down 550 to Highway 44, they followed dirt trails, cross country, past the Navajo Dam area (not yet built), Dulce and into Chama. No government explanation was ever given.

This year a fifty year celebration is being held in Aztec with experts giving lectures and a tour to the site. In all the publicity asking for witnesses or relatives of witnesses, no one has volunteered to explain what the people of Aztec really saw that night.

*Anonymous*



## **The Catfish**

If I told you there are catfish as long as a tall man and as big around as the trunk of an oak tree, you would think I was kidding, right? Well, I know a man that was diving in a well known lake not too far from here and saw one of these great fish. "I was swimming over what I thought was a log but when I turned around to look it moved away." These are the words of just one man that witnessed one of the great fish at Navajo Dam Lake.

*Jeremiah Bird*

## **The Shirt Ripping**

When I was little my great-grandma told me a story about my cousin. My cousin never believed the story of La Llorona so he went out for a late night fishing trip on the river. He was not having much luck when he heard a crying voice from down the river a bit. Thinking someone might be in trouble he went to investigate. What he saw was a shock. He saw a pale woman wearing a long white dress. He started to run and she gave chase. She caught up to him and ripped her nails into his back. His shirt was stained with blood. The next day my great-grandmother washed and washed the shirt but the blood wouldn't go away. I was skeptical at first until she showed me the shirt and I saw the blood still there ten years later.

*Curtis Hall*

## The Medicine Man

When my grandpa was young, he liked to go out and explore around in the hills and hunt. He told me one time he went hunting for coyotes out where the reservation starts. He was biking around and got deeper into the reservation. He was running down a hill when he tripped and rolled down the hill. He landed hard on a big rock and broke his forearm bad enough that about half an inch of the bone was sticking out. He remembered seeing a hogan a little ways back so he hiked back to the hogan, about to pass out. A Navajo man came out and motioned him to come in. The old man pulled out some kind of ash, from a bag around his neck and sprinkled it over my grandpa's arm. He then got a straight cedar stick, put in on his arm, wrapped it tight in leather, and said some chants in Navajo. Then he showed him out the door. My grandpa walked all the way back home, a good three hour walk. He said his arm felt good as new and would bend and move like it wasn't broken at all. As soon as he stepped off the reservation and could see some houses, his arm made a weird cracking noise, got all crooked in the splints. And started hurting almost unbearably again. The doctor told him he didn't know how he made it home without bleeding to death, yet could still carry his rifle. He had to wear a bandage and cast for months to heal it and still has a scar today.

*Anonymous*

## Never Cry Wolf

Bill had been driving all day since about the time hay is fed, the first of the day. To say he was in a bad mood is senseless, messing with him would be like kicking a loaded pole cat. Well, we all know that when you are mad you just don't drive slow, and this hombre was peeved. He had just been called, after a fine meal, to head on a cattle venture north of Aztec and probably wouldn't be back until well after cocktail. Turning on a little dirt road to the spot where the cowhands had the cattle held, Bill blew a tire with no spare. Standing by the worthless vehicle, cussin' such luck, he felt a pair of eyes on him from the brush. Turning to see what was out there his flashlight fell on what appeared to be part human and part coyote, crouching behind a sagebrush, growling. Taking a shot at it with a 22, he kept in the truck, it ran off on all fours-never to be seen again.

*Justin Beasley*

## Someone

Two of my friends were out on Southside River Road by a well location. driving around and they stopped at one particular well location and the one driving stopped and started telling the other one how on a previous day he was at the same well location and it was pretty dark outside. He had his vehicle turned off when all of the sudden he heard someone or something walk up to and around his car. When he looked around he saw nothing. As soon as he finished telling the story, no later, did they hear something or someone walk up to the car and walk around it. They briefly looked around and saw nothing so they took off as fast as they could.

*Anonymous*

## Gold in Potter's Canyon

In the late nineteenth century, three men robbed the depository in Santa Fe. They came north. They came out of Largo Canyon at Blanco. They took an old man's mule. They gave him two brand new double eagle gold pieces and they crossed the San Juan and proceeded to Durango. The posse was getting closer. They buried their gold in Potter's Canyon beneath a sandstone arch, within sight of the Knickerbockers. They were captured at Cedar Hill with no gold. They were sentenced to the territorial prison. One man died in prison. When the other one was released, he went back to Blanco and took up residence, spending his free time in the hills west of Blanco. He got the reputation of being insane. In the 30's, most likely in his sixties, he disappeared. Supposedly the only gold recovered was the two gold coins given to the old man. Even today when you go into Potter's Canyon you find pot holes that have been dug beneath anything that looks like an arch, or could have at one time looked like an arch, because the gold hasn't been found. In a wash, gold can sink six feet a year with sand moving downstream.

*Kate Malone*

## George F. Bruington

When I first moved to Aztec in the eighth grade I remember my grandma mentioning that my great-great-grandpa was the first judge in Aztec. I found out his name was George F. Bruington. He was born in Iowa on September 26, 1872. He came to Aztec around the early 1900's with his wife, Grace Alston. He and his wife had one daughter. My great-great-grandpa was a citizen of Aztec. He served on the school board, town board, probate judge and a Republican County Chairman. He died May 18, 1967. I thought it was very exciting to know that my family history had something to do with Aztec.

*Mark Bruington*



## Believe Me

One day us kids were home alone and I was babysitting. We had the music up loud, messing around and having fun. My cousin and my brother went up to the hills and started breaking a glass mirror with a stick.

My cousin started seeing blood in the mirror. Then my brother brought her back down to the house and she was scared. She wouldn't go to the front of the house. She stayed in back because she saw this person. We couldn't see him, just her, so I had to walk with her and convince her nobody was there. She kept saying, "He's right there and he's coming." We finally got her to the front of the house and she stood there looking at her hands and cried, "My hands are bleeding." We looked at it and there was nothing.

My brother called for our parents and covered our mirrors inside the house. He came back out and tried to help me get her back inside. She started seeing cards of kings and queens. We didn't know what was going on, but we finally settled her down and got her inside. My family came and had a prayer done for her and gave her corn pollen to keep evil away. We finally found out what had happened to her. What she saw was death coming to the family.

*Anonymous*

## High School Cove

In the fall of '96 two friends and I went hiking in Hart Canyon outside of Aztec off of Highway 550. We were up about ten miles, then we took a left turn and went about two miles and ran into three coves. There was a rumor of there being two cougars and an old black bear tracking the area; we had guns to protect us. Well, we wanted to take pictures of the coves when we come to one. It had a little dugout that we crawled into. There were markings of each class that graduated. The oldest one was from 1912; the last one was from 1962. The man who owns the land now will not let anybody go back there in fear he'll get sued for injuries.

*Robert Lydic*

## Aztec Memories

My mom used to work in Aztec as a dispatcher for the San Juan County Sheriffs Office. At that time it was not as busy as it is now. The sheriff's office used to be in the old county buildings across the street from the high school. The dispatchers desk was just down the hall from the jail cells where the prisoners stayed. The prisoners who were on good behavior were allowed to use the kitchen at the jail and so could the county employees. My mom thought it was scary to use the kitchen when the prisoners were in the kitchen, so she would go to the A&W to eat dinner because at that time it was about the only place that stayed open late. Because it seemed at that time Aztec shut down at sundown. Another thing about working for the sheriff's office was it was located right across from the booking department and she could see the people who the deputies would bring in who had been arrested. Even though it was scary at times, it was an interesting job.

*Carrie Strickland*

## My Grandpa and the Gold

A long time ago when I was about five years old, my grandpa just knew that there was gold in this certain place. My family would always go out to that place and dig for that gold, eat lunch and have a picnic. The story to this old gold is that a whole bunch of Spanish soldiers were going to their destination, but their gold was slowing them down. So they put it in a cave so they could come back and get it when the war was over. When they got through digging to hide the gold, the enemy found them and killed them all. And when my grandpa found the story it said this certain place had markings all over it. So my grandpa went looking for it along with my great-uncle and other guys. My grandpa just knew he would find that gold. He and my great-uncle would go out to that place every weekend. My great-uncle would bring the heavy utility truck because he made roads to drive on. It has been thirteen years since my grandpa has taken us out there and looked for it, because my grandpa has been gone for thirteen years. When my grandpa died it was the biggest loss in my life because I loved my grandpa very much. He would always take us hunting for the gold but he passed away and we didn't go again until two years ago. My dad told me about five months ago that my uncle never gave up because he knew my grandpa wouldn't want him to. Anyway he got his big metal detector and had a signal. So of course my dad and I got happy just thinking about all that money, but then I started thinking about my grandpa; he would want us to go out there and dig it up. But my dad was always busy and I was ready to go out there and dig it up myself just to make my grandpa and me happy. If I happen to go out there I will dress up just like the old man, my grandpa, would. I will wear my nice dress-up pants and nice dress-up shoes and always have a smile on my face.

*Chad Magee*



## Yet Another Catfish Story of Navajo Dam

Yet another story about the giant catfish of Navajo Lake. I have always wanted to go out to Navajo with a deep sea pole and some liver. If I just had the deep sea pole the big one would not get away. Divers who have been in the depths of Navajo have seen them. These fish can get as big as a grown man, and would sure scare an unsuspecting diver. I have heard many stories, but you know how fish stories grow. If I just had a pole. Every five to ten years divers go down and check the dam walls. In the 80's while they were down there the divers encountered large man sized catfish. They tugged on the ropes like crazy. When the ropes were inspected, they saw the areas rubbed. The corner of the ropes were about to snap from the collision below with the fish. The divers agreed never to go down there without other divers with spear guns to protect them.

*Dandy Vickers and Robert Lyric*

## The Ghost in My House

Ever since I was little my uncle has always told me that the man who built our house now haunts it. He says that the original owner hanged himself in the basement boiler room. If we misbehaved or if my uncle was just being mean, he would tell us that the ghost was going to get us. I was always scared to go down to the basement at night or even to the attic. I was always leery to stay up late by myself. I had never actually seen him, but I was still scared. A few years ago I began to see someone in my house at night. At first I thought it was just me, getting paranoid. So I asked if anyone else had seen it and they all said no. I see this "man" almost every week. But he has yet to talk to me or to even come very close. At first he scared me but now he has just become part of the house. Every once in a while he will knock something over. I think he does it just to let everyone know that he is still around.

*Anonymous*

## The Hanging Trees

There are two very old cottonwood trees which were the two main hanging trees. I know of them both because my great-grandfather, Floyd Rhodes, is the only living witness to the last hanging. One of the trees is by the Safeway parking lot entrance. The other is across Highway 550 from the A&W Restaurant

*Robert Lydic*

## Movin' On

In the early or middle forties it was reported that Gypsies traveling through Aztec were seen camping down by the bridge over the Animas River. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by small horses. All kinds of small tools, tubs, buckets, brooms and other small items were tied on the wagons. Locals remember them because they used to stop and come up in peoples' yards.

Camping by the river may well have been a laundry stop for these wandering people. Clothes were scrubbed on stones in the river and draped over the existing bushes to dry in the sun. Apparently there were numerous members in the family as evidenced by the many bushes adorned with brilliant colors. The colors certainly enhanced the appearance of the landscape. The gypsies never stayed long in one place. After a couple of days, they were seen moving on to explore new areas.

*Anonymous*

## Where's My Baby?

A friend and I were walking by the cemetery and there was this woman walking up and down the roads saying, "Where's my baby, where's my baby?" So my friend and I went into the cemetery and she walked up to us. "Do you have my baby?" she asked. My friend said, "No we don't." "Don't answer her." I said, and I saw the woman's eyes turn fiery red. I grabbed my friend and we ran out of the cemetery. The woman followed us to the gates. When we slowed down, I told my friend that for the most part the cemetery spirits are nice, but you may see spirits like that occasionally. When I got home I asked my dad about what I saw. He said that the woman I had most likely seen had died back in the 30's by some bandits who killed her. They stole her baby. He also said that she only shows up on the day she died, every year.

*Anonymous*

## Drunks - Not in Aztec

Back in the late 1800's it was illegal to be drunk in Aztec. There were no bars in Aztec. Any person found drunk in public was threatened and sometimes banished to Farmington. Farmington was considered a disgraced town because of no train and the stage was only there once a month. There were many saloons with women and there was nothing to prosper from the area. Farmington soon received a reputation for being a bad town.

*Robert Lydic*

## Fishing Line Sinkers

Many years ago, so the story goes, two men were working in the mines at Silverton - north of Aztec over in Colorado. When fall came, they decided they did not want to spend the winter there, so they packed their belongings on their horses and headed south to Durango.

On their way down, night overtook them, so they made camp. There were several rocks strewn about. When one of the men moved some to clear a place for his bedroll, he noticed the rocks seemed unusually heavy, but didn't think too much about it at the time.

The next morning when he was packing up to leave, he happened to kick one of these rocks. It occurred to him that it was probably a chunk of rich lead ore and he could smelt enough lead out of it to make several fishline sinkers. So he picked it up and put it in his saddlebag.

When he got home, he tossed the rock over by the gate post to be used later. The rock laid there all winter. The next spring, the man was gelling ready to go fishing but couldn't find any sinkers. Then he remembered that rock. He went and hunted it up and then got a hammer to break it up to see if he could melt out enough lead for the sinkers. When he hit the rock and chipped it, he had a big surprise.

Instead of lead ore, yellow gleamed back at him. It wasn't lead but gold. He got his partner and headed out of Aztec back to Silverton. They rode horses and tried to trace the path to where they had camped, to get the rest of the rocks. Try as they might, they never did find the place and never found their ore. So I guess the rocks are still there waiting for another camper to find them.

*Jim Green*

## Skin Walker

My father told me this story that happened to his brother at the mountains when his brothers stayed to herd sheep for their parents. One day in the mountains they heard something running down the hill toward them. As they stopped, it stopped. When they walked faster, it ran down toward them. Then they chased the sheep faster, but whatever was chasing them was hiding beside them, but far away. When they looked, it hid behind a bush. They made it back to their cabin. Later that night they were about to go to sleep. One of my brothers slept in the truck because it was hot inside. The others fell asleep, but one of my brothers couldn't sleep so he stayed awake. He heard someone open the door; he thought it was his brother who slept outside. So he called out to him but no answer. As the person came closer he brushed by his arm. It felt hairy and stiff. He couldn't move. My brother who was sleeping in the truck saw something run out of the cabin and ran inside to see what it had done. But everyone was ok., thank God.

*Anonymous*

## Navajo Dam

It is somewhat known by most locals that beneath the waters of Navajo Dam lies a village. I am not sure if it was inhabited shortly before it was covered or if it was ancient ruins that have been there for years. Large catfish also inhabit the water. Fish the size of a small car have been seen swimming around in the murky waters. In Navajo Dam people have been known to disappear in the waters. Not one of the live people who have drowned have ever been found. These people have probably been eaten by the giant fish. Another place, a few miles before the dam, are caves. Very few people know of this place. The people who know of this place have named it the Spanish Caverns. One of the caves leads to a refined pool of water inside a great rock. There are many caves but only one leads to the pool.

*William Rivas*

## Grandmother Lulu Olive Rathjen

Born in Charleston, Kansas in 1875 she was the first child and only three years old when her parents, George William McCoy and Ella Ann Blancett McCoy decided to go west to newer, and they hoped, better country. Big decisions were included and sometimes it might seem were slighted in mention and honor for the remarkable things they did.

After arriving in the San Juan Basin area their first cabin was built near the "upper crossing" of the Animas River which was at the upper end of the present Bondad Mesa near the mouth of "Hi Flume Canyon", which at that time was named the "Will McCoy Canyon" and was so called until the Utes built the irrigation ditch and flume which carried the water across the canyon.

When Mr. McCoy found he was on Ute land he moved on down the valley and for a while lived below the Colorado-New Mexico state line on the Bird place where one of the stage stations was located later. The Love family and Frank Blackmer were neighbors. It was here an Indian scare sent small Lulu with her mother and Aunt Jane Blancett, into the brush in the hills back of the cabin to spend the day in hiding. It was a day of fun for the little girl but very anxious time for her mother and Aunt Jane, whose baby, Guy, was born soon afterwards. Aunt Jane was the wife of Mrs. McCoy's brother, John Blancett, who was later killed at Turley, New Mexico while he was trying to make an arrest as deputy sheriff there...

## Grandmother Lulu Olive Rathjen - cont.

When Mr. McCoy would have to be come from home he left a saddled horse in the trees back of the house for his wife and little Lulu to get away on if there was need. On one such occasion when there had been other trouble, Mother Ella Ann saw some Indians coming toward their cabin so she slipped out with the little girl and the horse outran the pursuing Indians. Little Lulu riding behind her mother held tight as they fairly flew to safety. This was a pioneer baby with more real wild west adventures before she was old enough to go to school than any of our modern television stars ever thought of.

Lulu loved to ride with her father and toward evening she would walk straight into the sunset to meet him riding in and was lifted up behind him - what bliss to sit so high up and hold tight to him. One time however, when she was placed in the saddle by herself she did not get a good hold before the hot, sweaty horse shook hard and she toppled off and the ground flew up to meet her. It was a little unexpected but it has been funny ever since, and has been told and retold to children and the grandchildren too, and it grows a little sweeter at each telling.

Meanwhile Mr. McCoy's orchards were growing and in 1911 he sold 4,424 boxes of fruit at \$1.50 per box. In hauling them to Durango they would have to build fires around the wagons at night to keep the fruit from freezing...

## Grandmother Lulu Olive Rathjen - cont.

The big brick house he built is still in perfect condition. The making of those bricks and the building of the house is another story. An oxen shoe found in the old blacksmith shop is treasured by Lulu's daughter, Lena Covert, who believes it to be from one of the four oxen teams which pulled the heavy wagon from Charleston, Kansas to Aztec, when her mother was only three years old.

Mr. Mc Williams says that Will McCoy lived about five lives in comparison with most of us and the same can be said of his daughter, about whom this story is written.

Lulu Olive McCoy Rathjen's life span was from 1875 to 1972.

*Henriella Jordan*





## **Aztec UFO**

In 1948 a UFO crash landed just a few miles outside of Aztec in Hart Canyon. This was not a figment of one person's imagination. People saw this object from miles around. Just a few hours after the crash, members of the United States Government sealed off Hart Canyon. It is said that as many as twelve bodies were recovered from the crash, but was this really a UFO, or was it a meteorite slamming into the earth?

Many people believe it was a huge government cover-up to keep the people from knowing the truth. There are papers and stuff from this time that proves this incident is true.

My grandmother remembers when the military come to town and put a blockade across the road to Hart Canyon. They wouldn't let anyone up there and see what was going on. She also said a lot of people saw something crash into the canyon. But they never knew for sure what it was.

*Willie Montoya*

## **Basement Terror**

My friend came to school one day and told us that her sister went into the basement of their house over by Park Avenue. When she got to the bottom she felt a cold hand on her shoulder. But when she turned around, there was nobody there. She ran upstairs and saw bruises on her shoulder where the hand had grabbed her.

*Anonymous*

## The Gold in Hart Canyon

This story was told to me a few years ago by an old rancher from Bayfield. As we were taking him home we passed the turn that takes you up to Hart Canyon and on around to Arkansas Loop. He began to recollect a time when he and a friend were out there. As he rambled on he said tha they were in one of the cantons and found a crevice in the sandstone. As they looked in, they saw something that surely caught their eyes. At a closer look they found that it was actually gold bars that had been hidden within the crevices in the sandstone. As they looked over the situation, they needed some tools to get it out. When they left they thought they then would remember exactly where it was. They never found it again. He told me that every once in a while when he was down in that country he would look to see if he could find the treasure again. After years and years, he finally gave up.

*Danny Vickers*

## Window

The way high school used to be in Aztec, while in class one day a student became very upset with his teacher. They got into a quarrel and the student grabbed the teacher, pushing him out a second story window in the old, red brick, high school building. There were no screens on the windows either. Other students went to the aid of the teacher and were able to pull him back in before a tragedy occurred.

*Cleofus Montoya*

## The River of Souls

I live by the Animas River and one night I was helping my dad fix his truck and he made me hold the trouble light. We were at our house working when I heard something in the bushes behind me and my dad. I asked him if he heard it and he said, "No". I thought maybe it was just a cat or a raccoon or something like that. After we were finished I was to put up the tools and the trouble light. As I was walking back to the truck, I saw my dad all worried and curious about something. I asked him, "What happened?" He said that he thought he saw a man walk by the truck. I said, "It was probably Daniel," my brother. He said, "No your brother and your mom are in the house." So we watched out in the field and around the house for anything that might have been misjudged by us. As my dad walked in the house to tell my mom what was going on, I looked out in the field and saw a man standing by the big tree about a hundred yards away from our house. I told my dad and he believed me. The next day after he came home from work he said to me "Do you know what the Animas River means?" I said, "No." He said, "It means the River of Lost Souls." So from then till now we have been saying that's what we saw that night.

*Anonymous*

## Fred Sahara

Sometime between fifty-five and sixty years ago, I made the acquaintance of an old gentleman by the name of Fred Sahara. He was a small frail man who had lively eyes and a love of children. Looking back I would guess his age at seventy or eighty; he just seemed very old. He would entertain myself and other youngsters with stories of his life as a professional tightrope walker. He would mention during his career he had performed before most of the crowned heads of Europe and England at that time. Occasionally he would show posters and costumes he wore. He was billed as the Great Sahara. I've never been sure whether Sahara was his true name or not but that's the name he went by.

I had sort of a special relationship with him; I'm not entirely sure on how it got started. I think he initiated it by giving me a Christmas card that when you opened it you saw George Washington's face, (a \$1 bill ). Fred smoked a real smelly old pipe and his main type of tobacco, would you now, Geo. Washington pipe tobacco. I would buy him a one pound can of tobacco for 65¢-75¢, and he would give me the Washington Christmas card.

My strongest memories of him are those when he lived in a small room (one room shack), on the George Blancett place. He had two or three straight back chairs, a cot to sleep on and a small table upon which he almost continually played Canfield solitaire even when he was visiting with someone. He would also have his pipe going strong.

I cherish the memories of Fred Sahara; he brought an appreciation of a professional showman and a person who cared for children I feel lucky to have met and became a friend of his.

*Anonymous*

## A Summer Sensation

For many years I had a summer job in Durango and drove back and forth through Aztec on my way home. The last summer I did this I had a great time and left feeling it was the best ever. Driving at night down Highway 44, I passed through the Navajo Reservation as well as the Jicarilla Apache. It was quiet traveling down through these high mesas, beautiful at dawn with the pink sunrise to the east. By the time the sun was up, the clouds moved in and a gentle rain fell. The wet smell of the cedars, pinons and sage left a lasting sensation I still had when I got home. In this area you can feel like you are part of the land.

That night, after I unpacked, I had trouble eating, didn't sleep but a little and became very worried about something. There was no reason but it kept up for about three weeks. Finally, I said something to a friend of mine who owned an art gallery where some of my drawings were. We had another friend who was a Native-American Shaman. He came in and we talked and Carol encouraged me to share my worries with him. He put his hand on my wrist, closed his eyes and stood there silently for a few minutes. Then he softly said to me, "You have a lot of baggage you need to get rid of. If you are upset by something, you need to get it to go away." I took that to mean just problems facing me after a summer away where I could forget them. The thing was, I had been pretty happy lately without many concerns. The next day I went back to Carol's store and she said there was more but McCloud wasn't sure if he should tell me. I asked what it was...

## **A Summer Sensation - cont.**

She told me McCloud knew I was a very open person who shared my feelings with others and cared about others' feelings.

Passing through the Indian Reservations involved passing through a lot of places where there were burials and unsettled spirits. He thought a spirit had sensed my openness and had attached itself to me. I was so relieved I answered, "That's all?" If someone needed to be with me, or follow me around for a while it didn't bother me any.

That evening I could eat without hurting and that night I slept soundly. The next time I saw the shaman I thanked him and said, "I don't know what was supposed to happen but this is what did happen." He just smiled a gentle smile and nodded. I never actually had a feeling the spirit left or stayed around until it didn't need me anymore, but I sure wasn't anxious once I understood.

Since I moved to Aztec, every time I drive south through the Navajo Reservation, especially, I feel a sense of peace, like part of me now belongs out there.

*Anonymous*

## **A Ruin Once Lost**

There's nothing worse than rain you can't get out of, except cold rain. That's what it was, both, that day. Out with my friends on that chilly weekend, we had ruins on our minds. We were about three miles from the truck, and more than likely lost. The rain started and after an hour we knew it wasn't going to give up. We were still looking, but now our goal was shelter. We stood under trees, rocks, but nothing seemed to work. Soon we spied a cave at the head of the canyon about 125 feet up. We took an eternity, but when we climbed up, a marvel awaited us. Inside the cave a tall spiral of block rose before us, and surrounding it many other ruins. Our eyes lit up in the darkness, and we scampered in. We were glad to be out of the rain, but we were more glad to achieve what we came to do. We found a ruin once lost.

*Clint Pavey*

## **Wiped Out Ruins**

Many of the ruins in Aztec have been wiped out because of stupidity. Where the Aztec Ruins are located they have been preserved as a National Monument. No more than a quarter of a mile away ruins were destroyed. Contractors and big real estate people came in and leveled ruins and many artifacts. Now in place of the ruins are houses, streets, and driveways. If people weren't so careless we would be able to see the ruins we lost. We need to preserve and take care of these areas. Ruins tell us a lot about our past ancestors, let people know in order to keep this from happening again.

*Shane Hilbers*

## **"There is But a Step Between Me and Death ... "**

Treasure hunting - the very sound brings forth visions of pirates and conquistadors. Yet those of us who hunt it know there is more to it than the romance you see in the movies. There is real danger, real snakes, real bullets and if some one dies, there is no chance for another take.

It was one of those difficult missions we face from time to time back in '91. We had been pursuing a Spanish treasure on the steep face of a particularly high mountain. We had worked our way down a hill that had a grade of about 45 degrees and a deep gravel and cactus cover. When I say worked our way down, it was spent half the time sliding, hoping not to go over the cliff, half the time wondering how we were going to get back up, and picking out thorns between the halves. Upon arriving at a pre-determined destination, a particularly enticing cliff, we threw our rope ladder over the edge and fastened it to the rock at the top. It was a thirty foot rope ladder and a thirty-five foot drop. My friend Stan went down first with myself anchoring and making sure the rope ladder was going to remain in place. Stan dropped the last couple of feet onto the ledge that ran along the face of the cliff, a ledge of about 18" in width. Now it was my turn. Over the edge I went, making my way down the rope until I too could drop onto the ledge. It was then the wind chose to come up. Now an 18" ledge at that altitude, it suddenly seems like a death sentence. We stood with our back to the rock wall, as flat as our bodies would get, hoping we provided too little sail for the wind to throw us off. For some reason it was then my good friend decided to yank my chain about my Bible beliefs.



## There is but a Step...• cont.

"John, I don't see how anyone could believe even one thing in that Bible you carry." "Well, Stan, what about First Samuel, Chapter 20, Verse 3?" I queried. All I heard for a long moment was that forty-mile an hour wind. "I don't know, what does it say?" came the timid reply. "It says 'There is but a step between me and death'," I replied. Stan chuckled ever so quietly and said "I guess I have to believe that don't I?" There was no need of any further inquiry at this point. Stan suddenly believed something in that Bible.

That night at the campfire I questioned once again, "Stan, if you don't believe the Bible, then you must not believe that part in Proverbs 30:33 either, where it says '... the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood ....'" But I didn't have to prove that part either. Stan already believed that part too. I guess it isn't a matter of what is or isn't true. Truth has already been set down before us. It is a matter of personal choice of what we choose to believe is true. If one chooses not to believe in gravity, one may choose that of his own will. That does not change the facts that an object falls down and not up.

*John A Melancon*



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