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A Day Without Sunshine

I am convinced. New Mexico restored my health and, I think, saved my life. Actually my parents did that when they moved from back east to New Mexico on my doctor's advice. Horace Greeley wasn't the only person to recommend going west.

At first, we lived south of Albuquerque where we had an adopted (stray) family dog, grape arbors and an old cow pony. I finished a move-interrupted elementary school year where I met a diverse group of new kids, including *nativo Hispanos* and some Native Americans whose ancestors and cultures predated Europeans by many centuries.

I spent the summer riding my horse on the mesas, exploring, and learning to love the vistas, plants and animals of my new home state. My health and strength improved and, of course, I turned dark brown in the New Mexico sunshine.

According to meteorologists, Albuquerque has an annual average of 278 days with sunshine, or put another way, the Sun reaches the ground here 76% of the time. It seems like more often than that to me.

New Mexico's sunshine permeates its culture, food (my chili choice is red), arts and crafts, jewelry, music and dance, architecture and people. A great part of the enchantment in our Land of Enchantment comes from our sunshine, I believe.

And the *skies*! Even though I took Doc Harrington's meteorology class (he wrote the textbook for it, by the way), I cannot remember the names of clouds. But who cares? The majesty of New Mexico cloud formations are inspiring by any name. How I missed them during my decade long West Coast sojourn. I had great adventures out there and made good friends but I always

knew I would come home to New Mexico and its sunshine and glorious skies.

The New Mexico sun shines on great ranch country. A friend of mine comes from a pioneering ranching family that settled in New Mexico six generations ago. The original family ranch was an astonishing 144 sections (92,160 acres). *Vaqueros* and cowboys worked together, blending their energies on the ranch for a common purpose. That blending of energies by diverse peoples for a common purpose still goes on in New Mexico today.

My stride has grown shorter, my pace slower. I no longer ride the mesas on a cow pony. Instead, I ride paved streets on a bicycle and I walk every day in the healing New Mexico sunshine. Yes, I know, meteorologists say 24% of our days sunshine doesn't reach the ground here. But there is no day without sunshine in my New Mexico. It's sunshine is ever-present deep within my psyche.

If as they say, "Home is where the heart is," then New Mexico is my home. I spread my grandfather's, father's and mother's ashes in the nearby mountains. And when my children spread my ashes there, my love affair with New Mexico will be complete.

