

SOCORRO REFLECTIONS

Narratives by Middle-School Students at Cottonwood Valley Charter School Fall 2010

6th Grade

Socorro County Fairgrounds

Playing a game of paintball, I shoot the first can, and then the second one. I shoot five more cans and my time is up. I won a huge teddy bear! The Socorro County Fair is a great place to go with your family. We mostly go for the funnel cakes because they're so "yummy in my tummy"! It's really exhilarating because of all the games and events. I saw a man kiss a pig. It was very, very funny and disgusting at the same time but it was for a fund raiser. I played some games, like darts, the pitching game and the ball roller. We also went on a couple of carnival rides like the Hammerhead and the Tea Cup. When the day was over, I said, "What a thrilling day!"

New Mexico Chile Proppers Fun-Fly

The radio controlled A-10 Warthog Fighter Jet takes off, the engines are humming, and the cold wind touches me. It's the first weekend in October at the New Mexico Tech flying field and the annual Fun-Fly. People from around New Mexico come to see the New Mexico Chile Proppers, a local model airplane club, fly their model planes. People bring their own model planes and helicopters to play games and compete. The terrible smell of gasoline coming out of the planes fills my nose and I feel the cold winds of the morning. There are so many different models – some planes are home made and some are store bought. My favorite one was homemade and it had a digital camera on the top. The best part of the day was when I won the grand prize – a RC seaplane!

Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

As I looked out the car window I could see wide open brown fields but not very many birds were in sight. My mom and grandpa were sitting in the front of the car talking about the refuge and the birds we should look for on our way in. We went in the winter so we could see the Sand hill cranes and Snow geese that spend their winters at the refuge. I wasn't thrilled about getting up early in the morning but it was alright. "Is today ever going to end?" I muttered under my breath. Suddenly, we saw the snow geese in the sky! We heard them everywhere. There were hundreds and hundreds of them. My mom, my grandpa and I were amazed by all the birds! As we were about to drive out of the refuge we saw a deer! Before you could snap your fingers, my mom was out of the car to take pictures. She watched the deer and so did I. It finally ran away and my mom got back in the car and we drove home.

Macey Center At New Mexico Tech

The red curtains over the black stage opened for the N.D.I. (National Dance Institute) performance at Macey center. N.D.I. is a program that brings music and the art of choreography to children all over New Mexico. As the girls scrambled out for the dance "Venus", my face turned the color of Mars. Even though I didn't have a special part, I was still skittish about this dance. The green lights shined in my eyes and I squinted – I had waited so long for that feeling. Tim, our dance teacher, waved at us from the sound box in the back of the theater. Trying to distract myself from the crowd, I looked up at the student artwork hanging from the ceiling. The S.W.A.T. (Super Wonderful Advanced Team) Team and the Celebration Team had looked forward to this for 3 weeks, but I was frightened.

New Mexico Tech Hill on 4th of July

Waiting for the fireworks to begin, we set up our carpet on Tech Hill. Suddenly, we heard a thundering "Boom"! Another one goes off, "Boom"! You could hear all the "Ohhhhs" and "Ahhhhhs" from the tons of people there including me. You saw many firework shapes and sizes swivel up into the deep, relaxed dark blue sky. In the middle of the fireworks display, people started lighting their own fireworks. People were everywhere. It was noisy from the fireworks and all of the people talking and laughing. I feel tired and weak as I lug myself back to my house to go to bed. As I lie in bed I think of what a fantastic display of fireworks it was this year.

Water Canyon

The stream was flowing fast, I could hear it, but the canyon stood still and quiet. The ground was bumpy with all the rocks. My parents and I had a picnic in Water Canyon last summer. There were picnic tables surrounded by shiny rocks like pyrite. We looked for a nice shady spot to eat. We were the only people there so it was peaceful and quiet. I could hear birds chirping, and I could feel the wind push me ahead. After our picnic we decided to hike up the side of the canyon. We walked on the trail and saw many different birds and a forest of trees. When we were far above the canyon, my mother got a bit scared, so we walked back. It was getting windy, so we thought we should go home. It felt like the trees were waving good-bye to us.

Macy Center at New Mexico Tech

Energy flows through my body as I dance to "Venus". Macy Center has always felt large but standing on stage its size increases to infinity and beyond. The rows of seats in front of me are filled to the brim with eager faces. People come to Macy Center to see performers from all over the world but today is special because a bunch of children, including myself, are performing in this year's National Dance Institute (NDI) performance. This year's theme is "love" and I am playing Venus, the Goddess of Love. When the performance ends, the band stops and the crowd is clapping and cheering as if they had never clapped or cheered before. My heart swells up with pride when I soak in the new music of my exit and my heart shrinks as I leave the stage.

The New Mexico Tech Park

"Mmmmm!" It's the wonderful smell of clean cut grass. I look at the large pond that surrounds a fountain with its one large jet of water. Despite the sun around them, all the trees are huge and shady. Little bits of sun leak from around the cracks of the leaves and the branches. Crazy, the wonderful white noise of children playing at the playground makes me feel good. I love the quacking of the ducks and the laughter of the children. Mostly, I love walking in the park with my friends or my family.

New Mexico Tech Golf Course

It's winter. The golf course is like an oasis that is starting to die. A mountain has clouds hanging over it like a storm is about to happen. I can't even see the "M" because of the clouds covering it. The mountain has little dots of white on it from when it snowed a couple of days ago. When I turn around, I can see the campus. Then I turn back around. The grass on the driving range is light brown. The Cottonwood trees are swaying back and forth. I can hear the wind whistle in my ear. I hit the ball and it goes straight. I turn around and smile at my grandpa and brother.

Fourth of July at the Plaza

Everyone plugs their ears as an earsplitting boom sounds. Sitting in the plaza, by the post office, enjoying the music, I eat roasted corn and see the fireworks at New Mexico Tech. The plaza is surrounded by ancient shops. Tonight there are stands selling food native to New Mexico. Trees cover the stage where the band plays. The moon is big, showering us in silver light. Kids wave their sparkler sticks, lighting up the night, pretending they are Harry Potter characters. Fireworks shake the earth. The trees seem to be waving to the beat with the dancing adults. Later we all go home sleeping soundly for our night at the plaza is over.

Socorro Farmer's Market

The Socorro Farmer's Market is held on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. The Farmer's Market is in the plaza from June until October. You can buy many different kinds of fruits and vegetables. You can also buy honey, flowers, jewelry and other handmade items. Many people attend the market because it is a good place to buy healthy, locally grown food. The prices are also very reasonable. Each trip to the Farmer's Market is like going for the first time because crops ripen at different times. I like to go to the Farmer's Market to buy honey. My favorite vegetables are lettuce, tomatoes, and corn.

New Mexico Tech Field

A flash of metal swiveled in front of my face as I fought my opponent. People, in leather armor, come to the New Mexico Tech field to practice with rapiers, epees and daggers tipped with duck tape. The world spun around me as I tried to find my opponent. I started to feel dizzy as the heat blew through my armor. Suddenly, I plunged at my friend and slashed at his heart. Finally! I beat my first opponent! SCA (Society of Creative Anachronism) is a club for people who want to re-create the medieval ages. It is also very challenging and entertaining!

Sedillo Park

Grassy fields, and tall, green trees - it's Sedillo Park! A place where kids play soccer, throw footballs and set-up for parades. A week ago, I was playing a soccer game with my friend Hope. I remember the sun beating down on us, the wind rushing against our faces, and falling on the soft grass every time I tripped on my shoe laces. I also remember having my ninth birthday party here. There's also a baseball field, a tennis court, and a swimming pool. There's always a ton of birthday parties, kites flying, and a lot of people laughing and running around having a great time.

M Mountain

The mountain is so quiet. I saw a hawk once and my grandpa likes to shoot the jackrabbits we see. Once I heard a snake and my grandpa shot it and skinned it. He makes walking sticks and puts the snake skins on the end because they make the best grip. On the mountain there are a lot of cacti and thorn bushes. I saw a small Cottonwood tree once. I wish that I lived on the mountain. The sky looks closer when you are on top of the mountain. My grandpa tells me, "Look up at the sky and tell me what you see." For him, the sky is spiritual. When I see the mountain I think of a big potato because it's bumpy and sometimes, in the summer, it is hot like a potato out of the microwave.

Sedillo Park

The grass is pushing across our shoes. The trees look like a person waving goodbye. All the sprinklers suddenly turned on, so we get wet. We lay down in the grass under a tree. All the trees are still alive, but they have dead leaves. My party is extraordinary. I'm having a remarkable time. I have many friends and my family here to celebrate.

Socorro County Fair Grounds

“BEEEEEP”! A bull rider comes right out of the gate and this bull is bucking and spinning for his life! My favorite part of the rodeo is the bull riding, because it looks painful and fun. Sitting next to me are my mom and dad. I hear the announcer talking, the crowd roaring and the wind whistling in the background. From where I am sitting, I can see almost everything at the fair grounds – the stalls in front of the arena, the rides next to the entrance, and Kelly Hall. That announcer is blabbering our ears off, and it is getting very annoying. There is so much that happens at the fair grounds every year: a carnival, livestock judging, bull riding, bronc riding, and last, but not least, the county fair dance. The Socorro County Fair and Rodeo is my most favorite time of the year.

Macey Center at New Mexico Tech

Sitting down in the deep, red chairs, my class and I sit among the giant audience and start to chat. Suddenly, it's pitch-black and I feel tense. Everyone is as silent as a rock and I am thinking, “What is going on?” Deep, red velvet curtains slid open silently and the show begins. I see Haitian musicians strumming and singing. Emeline Michel shows, teaches, and finally invites us to dance on stage with her. When the show is over, the musicians and dancers bow to the audience. After a moment of silence, a roaring applause thunders in my ears and the deep, red curtains slide smoothly back in.

The Plaza

“We have a winner!” I was at the plaza with my aunt. That day I met a girl who taught me how to play checkers. I was excited because I just won a movie called *Good Boy*. Looking around me I saw big, shady trees everywhere. In the big, white gazebo there were about 20 people playing music. My friend and I looked at the road that surrounds the plaza and I said, “It feels like we are on an island”. Around the plaza there are businesses like the post office, a barber shop, a clothing store, and more. Events like Socorro Fest and the Farmer's Market take place in the plaza.

Socorro County Fair Grounds

Entering the arena, I got down off my horse, and heard the announcer's voice, “The Socorro County Fair and Rodeo Sweetheart is ...” and he said my name! At first, all I could think about was that he had messed up my name. That feeling didn't last long though and I was filled with excitement. Every year in August, there is a County Fair at our fairgrounds. There is a contest for Sweetheart, Princess and Queen. The event is held in the Gary Perry arena right before the rodeo. In the arena, I looked up and saw M Mountain and the setting sun just behind it. I saw the weeds that stick out like sore thumbs and the cacti casting shadows. All of this overwhelmed me as I ran around the arena – in a few moments my reign would begin.

7th Grade

Water Canyon

Walking through the green bushes of the canyon I saw Smokey's Cave. The birds in Water Canyon whistled in my ears as I walked toward the large empty cave. The noise of the waterfall echoed around me. Sitting in the cave, I watched my babysitter put the picnic on the table while her two sons whispered to each other. I longed to follow the sounds of the waterfall. I pictured the extraordinary beauty of its tall, shiny, wet surface. Birds flew in every now and then but left quickly. I listened to the wind blow the trees, watching the leaves fall on the ground. Listening to the sounds of the canyon around me, I waited for my babysitter to announce the picnic was ready. I felt content in the canyon, the smell of the summer in the air and the rushing water whispering in my ears.

Water Canyon

In Water Canyon there are many, many pine trees and lots of fresh air. My Mom, Dad and I had a picnic in Water Canyon. There are picnic tables and barbecue grills. After we ate, we went on a hike up the side of the canyon. We found a tree with bear scratches on it. A stream runs through Water Canyon and we climbed through a slow moving water fall.

San Antonio

"Mom, Sean! It's snowing outside!" I shout to my mother and brother. Snow is very rare in the small southwestern town of San Antonio, New Mexico. On their way to and from Bosque Del Apache NWR, migratory birds fly over our house in the winter and spring. San Antonio is an agricultural community with farms that grow hay, cabbage, corn, melons and chile. People travel through San Antonio on their way to Carrizozo, Capitan, Alamogordo and Roswell. Motorcyclists stop on their way to bike shows and rallies to have our famous green chile cheeseburgers at The Owl Bar or The Buckhorn. The town may be small but it is everything to me.

Green Chile

The hotness burns your mouth, but it tastes so good you can't resist eating it. Green chile can go on any food because it adds flavor and spice. When you buy green chile you may think it's not hot, but it will burn your hands when you peel it. After you buy it and roast it, take it out of the sack, peel it and put it in baggies. Put the baggies in the freezer and it will be good for a while. I like chile cheese fries. You can also make chile rellenos. Green chile is special to me because my family always eats it.

4th of July Firework Display

“Boom”, goes the fireworks and the crowd cheers and roars! Every 4th of July the people of Socorro get together at New Mexico Tech for the annual 4th of July celebration. Last year I went with my friend Lee and we saw other friends from our school. One of the most famous fireworks, and my favorite, is the dog bone. The dog bone makes the biggest sound and can be seen every year. Our family goes to North Drive because it is the best spot to watch the fireworks. My family and friends all have a great time at the fireworks display. It is one of my favorite family traditions because I have gone my whole life.

San Lorenzo Canyon

San Lorenzo Canyon is a big, long, wide canyon north of Socorro. I went to San Lorenzo this summer and climbed on a HUGE, round rock that was really hard to climb. My whole family went that day. While climbing, I heard birds and I scared a bat that was in a small cave. The sky looked so blue and I watched fluffy clouds float by. Being in San Lorenzo Canyon makes me so giggly.

Box Canyon

I rock my body up and down and reach far for my hold. Gripping the rock I pull myself up. Once I am on the rock, I look around and see the mountains covered with dirt and rock, and the pointy cacti poking at the conifer trees. Box Canyon is such a great place to experience nature. You can even camp there. I wait for a few minutes to see the sunset: orange, red, pink, and so many different kinds of purple. The voices of my brother Sepp and his friends are echoing and it feels like they are far away but they are right there with me. Many people boulder here because there are so many huge boulders. When I am at Box Canyon my heart is filled with millions of emotions. To just jump on the rock and then zoom up the rock. I look back and see the old pinon trees with their old, gray patched bark falling off like striped candy. Goodbye great Box.

San Lorenzo Catholic Church

Pulling into the driveway, a dead tree and an old bell catch my eye. I think to myself, “If my grandpa can get up the ramp and into the church, our prayers here will help him.” Inside the old adobe church, my eyes glimpse all of the old plaster Santos. This is a truly wonderful place. Catholics make a pilgrimage to this church every year during Easter. We, as well as many other people, believe that prayers made inside this church will be answered.

Clarke Field

Up the half-pipe, back down again, and grinding the rails. The skateboarders are having a ball at the skate park. Next to the skate park is a football field, but no one is playing today. Around Clarke Field are enormous trees that give a lot of shade. The little kids play at the playground, adults sit at the picnic tables. My cousin and I just got there with our bikes. I hear the little kids laughing on the playground. Riding my bike here makes me feel joyful. I wish I could spend more time here.

The Christmas Parade

A piece of candy rushes toward my face and I have the compulsion to grab it. Instead I got pelted by it. It's a cold night in December and time for the annual Christmas parade on California Street. Almost everyone in town is there, standing on one side of the street. There are so many people talking, I can't hear myself thinking. The sirens that signal the beginning of the parade are very loud. The floats start to pass by and their lights are illuminating. Finally, I see my Dad on the Mountain Mail float. The float stops and my Dad let me sit with him and throw candy. It is my first time on a parade float, so I am very nervous but thrilled at the same time.

My Grandpa's Farm in Polvadera

"Drip-drop" is the sound of my sweat hitting the ground. Working on my grandpa's farm during the summer is hot and sweaty. My grandpa's farm has trees all round the right side – we call it "the box." The chicken coop is not like the small ones you see in the movies, it's tall. There are 5 chickens and a rooster. Those chickens are a pain. My grandparents' house is a two story adobe house with 3 bedrooms and two bathrooms. I like spending time on my Grandpa's farm but I don't like working there in the summer picking vegetables.

Socorro Fest

Hearing my favorite song, "Sweet Home Alabama", I went to the dance floor and danced. Bands played many different kinds of music all day and night. But there's more than music at Socorro Fest. There are children's games, contests, and food. The prize for one of the contests is a Socorro Fest t-shirt. One year I entered the contest and won a t-shirt!

Kelly Mine

"How much longer until we get to the mine?" I shout to my brother and grandmother. The new birds of spring are flying fast in the blazing heat. All we can hear is our footsteps and the soft breeze. I am anxious to get to the cool, mine entrance in the side of the mountain where I can sit and relax. Looking into the distance, I see M Mountain. I see wavy trees all around me and tons of old stream rocks. We all wish it was easier to get up the mountain - less hills and less rough terrain like rocks and spiky plants like cactus. Somebody told me this place was once a town, now all that is left is a really old Catholic church and the old silver mine.

New Mexico Tech Duck Pond

The duck grabs the flying bread in its orange bill and the other ducks look on enviously. The duck pond is surrounded by short trees and tall trees. Off in the distance, I see at least a dozen geese. Tons and tons of frogs are croaking near the pond. This is a fantastic place to get a breath of fresh air and think. The air smells like dead leaves and pond water on this astounding September morning. As I stride alone around the pond there are no humans in sight, only animals, nature and me. The feeling of excitement rushes through my veins. When I'm at this wonderful place I get the feeling that I'm in a different world.

The Rio Grande

With a long toss of our fishing lines my cousin and I are fishing. Visible through the thick brush of plants, I see the outline of San Antonio. Birds chirping and the sound of gushing water rings in my ears. I'm nervous because we almost catch nothing. The Rio Grande is a slow moving river that has Cottonwood trees on either side of it. Yup, it is fishing season and the catfish aren't biting. I'm thinking we're wasting our time, but then the fishing line pulls. The fish is struggling with all his might to get free. I focus all my thoughts to one ... he won't escape back into the Rio Grande.

Socorro Airport Fly-In

The engine roars and the plane starts moving – a very typical sight and sound at the Socorro airport's annual Fly-In. Me, my brother and Griffin watch the planes take off and soar in the air. I feel a cold gust as the propellers start to turn. There are planes everywhere and you can hear them fly over your head. The airport is filled with people and so many different activities. There is a paint ball stand and a small airplane ride. Someone is selling hamburgers, chips and sodas so the smell of food is in the air along with the smell of gasoline and oil. There are planes of all kinds: old war birds, biplanes, a humongous military jet and a helicopter plane that you can go inside. The Fly-In is special to me because I want to be an air force pilot.

Scotts Mesa

Juniper and piñon are scattered everywhere around me. My family is scouring Scotts Mesa for arrowheads. I hear birds chirping over the scuffling of my dogs. Shards of pottery and arrow heads jut out of the ground like tacks. In the midst of summer, Scotts Mesa is a strangely chilly area. The grass is the color of a freshly made latte. Tiny cacti are almost impossible to see due to the long grass that surrounds them. Black flecks of obsidian dot the ground like ground pepper. Looking down at the sheer drop on the west side of Scotts Mesa I marvel at how amazing a mesa in the middle of the desert can be.

8th Grade

Indian Day at the Alamo Navajo Reservation

Indian Day is an annual event at the Alamo Navajo Reservation. On this day we sing traditional Navajo songs and celebrate our culture. This year I went with my family and friends. We saw family members that I haven't seen in a long time. People were playing games and eating delicious, tasty Navajo burgers. I loved the strawberry smoothies! I saw little kids playing with little toy guns and sticks they used for swords. I went to Indian Day four years ago but this year I saw many changes. There were more booths and games. It was my grandma's birthday when we went four years ago and being at Indian day this year brought back a bunch of joyful memories. She laughed more on that day than any other day I can remember.

Explosion Demo at EMRTC

The feel of the red trigger was cold to the touch as I crammed it down into the yellow trigger box. *CRACK-BOOM!* As always, I saw the explosion before I heard the boom. The scent of explosives was mixed with the scent of wild flowers that polka-dotted the hill that surrounded us. My eyes instinctively searched for any wreckage. I saw the old, abandoned Pony Express trail that has been there since before my dad was born. The sound of a truck caught my attention. "Must be one of the clean up crew going to see if there is any more danger or if the path is clear," I thought. My dad was leading the tour and that made me swell with pride because he is one of the best. Time to go. Out from behind M Mountain and back to the EMRTC office.

San Lorenzo Canyon

Cool evening air fills the canyon, making an ideal change from the hot days. Mighty sandstone walls surround me, giving off a rustic atmosphere and the sense of walking through an alley. The familiar scent of mesquite and bratwurst cooking over an open fire fill the air. In the distance, the rustle of bird wings remind me of the small, white stained bat caves high up on the cliffs I see every time I visit the canyon. My shoes sink into the sand as I walk across the canyon floor. Above me, the first stars come out as the day ends.

New Mexico Tech Pool

Swimming, chlorine, diving board - all part of special moments at the New Mexico Tech pool. Every year we go to the pool with our class and have a pool party. My friends have birthday parties at the pool and we eat at the picnic area and swim. The water is refreshing in the summer time. New Mexico Tech faculty and students can swim for free. The community can swim too, but they need to buy a pass. During the winter they put a big bubble over the pool and it keeps the heat inside, so while it's snowing you can swim!

The Rio Grande

East of Socorro is our river, the Rio Grande. The river is a place where my family and friends can play in the water and camp at the park. One of the many times I have been to the Rio Grande was the day before my friend left to go to Germany. It was a hot day and the water felt cool. We built a small camp fire about twenty feet away from the water. Caked in the super slippery clay mud, we were splashing each other and laughing. When we had enough, we went to sit by the fire and make smores. We were sad to leave, but we had to go home some time.

The Loma Theater

Strolling into the Loma movie theater I can see how the brown-ish walls have been worn by time. Walking down the scratchy carpet to my usual chair, the scent of popcorn and Coke hit my nose. I sit in the dimmed light, and all I can hear is the chatter of people. Sinking into the soft cushioned seat, my eyes are immediately fixed on the screen. Cool refrigerated air chills my skin making it feel below-zero and I zip up my jacket. Talking immediately stops as the screen grows brighter, illuminating the room. The sudden silence makes me feel restless, but I watch as the movie begins.

Indian Day at the Alamo Navajo Reservation

The moment I enter the Alamo Reservation my heart is racing out of control. Indian day is a gathering to celebrate my culture, my enormous family, and all the traditions that are important to us. Candy and prizes fly through the air from the parade floats reminding me of being a little kid again. The pounding of the sweet heartbeat of the drums bring on dancing and that familiar sound of togetherness. The afternoon Gospel singing brings on happy voices from the crowd, especially from my mother. My stomach is growling from the smells of traditional Indian foods. Underground cake, with its fruity bread taste, blue corn tamales with green chile, and my Aunty's fabulous fruit smoothies make for a perfect Indian Day for me.

The View from the Quebradas

It is five o'clock in the afternoon and we are making our way up the mountain. The green mountain from my memories is now painted with the colors of fall and splashed with the colors of the sunset. After crossing the muddy river, the top of the mountain is in sight. We reach the top and I leap out of the car, my feet hitting the strikingly familiar trail, the sun hitting my face. This view from the top is absolutely extraordinary. The oranges of the sunset have now become the lavenders of the night. The colors of the sky hit the forests of Cottonwoods, the emerald fields of the farm life in San Acacia, the red and tan walls of New Mexico Tech in Socorro, and the endlessly flowing brown river. These views from the Quebradas are special because they bring back so many vivid memories, and make me love my hometown even more than I already do.

Chile Roasting

The delicious, yet pungent smell of roasting chile brings tears to our eyes the second we step inside. My family is coming to retrieve the bag of roasted chile we ordered earlier in the week, my sister and I run off to the back room to watch the experienced hands turn the black cage over the blaze roasting the chile to perfection. Back at home, we slather our hands in Vaseline and peel back the tough layer of skin that protects the succulent hot chile inside. If you get the chile before it turns red, you can use these spicy green peppers in chile rellenos, Navajo tacos and huevos rancheros. The red chile can be dried and hung as ristras or ground into powder and used in soups. You can also use the red chile fresh in salsa and enchiladas. Taking a bite of our first traditional meal from the harvest, I close my eyes and I think of my New Mexico.

Mount Baldy

Gazing down at the rocks below, it is indeed fantastic being on top of Water Canyon in the middle of summer. The altitude is so high that trees can no longer grow, instead they are replaced by grassland. You can see the boundary that separates the two – on one side there is a dense forest and on the other side there is grassland. I turn around and see the Langmuir Laboratory behind me. Founded in 1963, the laboratory is used to study clouds that produce lightning, hail and rain. Sitting on the boulder eating my sandwich with the cold wind picking up crumbs of food and sending them to the eternal abyss, I am thinking of many things all at once but one thought keeps repeating in my head. Beautiful.

Kelly Mines

“Wow! That is amazing,” I am thinking to myself. I can feel the goose bumps rise on my flesh as I lean over the old, deep, black hole in the ground with its rusty metal structures built for the mine surrounding it. The breeze flows through my hair as I look up and see the huge green and brown mountains. Pine trees are moving and I can hear the birds chirping and the squirrels rustling in the bushes. Easter break is my chance to visit my favorite place – the Kelly Mines. Since the mines are no longer operating the metal structures are broken down and the chutes are filled with rocks and dirt. Once a thriving mining community town – it is now a ghost town, empty and abandoned.

Magdalena

The gravel roads, the aged buildings, the fresh air blowing into your nose, and kids free to run anywhere. Autumn is the perfect time to go to Magdalena if you enjoy cold weather. Pinon picking starts every fall. The town is so small there isn't even a traffic light and there is only one big school for grades kindergarten through high school. On both sides of Highway 60 there are many stores that sell artwork and crafts made by local people. The mountains are perfect for camping and hunting. Winter begins when the tip of the mountains are sprinkled with snow. My grandpa takes us to cut firewood before winter starts. Every year about one foot of crisp white snow drops to the ground and it is perfect for sledding and snow angels. Even though Magdalena is a small town, it holds city-sized memories.

Socorro Public Library

Following around the small, smart boy who was posing for me and many other kids by picking up the largest books he could find and shoving them into his plastic bag, I got depressed. When he kidnapped books like *The College Dictionary* and *Harry Potter* I got books like *The Cat in the Hat* and *Star Wars*. Slowly, I started to walk away from the group of kids and the kids' room. Walking into the main library, I realized that I have always loved this library because of the great never ending smell of books and old wood. On this day, this kid was demolishing my experience of sitting down and reading great books. Kids these days.

The Quebradas

We drive through the hills and I peer over the edge and feel the adrenaline rush through me. As we drive, I notice a white and blue metal fence. My uncle tells me to get down, but I see a "No Trespassing" sign so we drive on looking at all the sensational desert scenery. My uncle and I head back through the worn down dirt road that looks like water once ran on it. My uncle has to slow down because the road is too rough. Although they seem to be dried, yellow and dying, I look out the window and admire the yucca plants. Behind the yuccas I see a lone tree minding its own business and in the background a somewhat rounded mountain. The Quebradas are my other home.

Etscorn Observatory

The uneven, wood and gravel steps left my feet as I entered the Etscorn Observatory. Skies of black spotted with clusters and spots of stars hung above me as I made my way to the first of two small domes. I stepped into line behind several other kids from my school that had decided to spend their Friday night at the Star Party. Climbing up a few steps on the ladder, I peered through the giant lens, and looked in awe at the big red dot that came into my vision: Mars. Skipping out of the dome, I met with my friends, and went into the main building where a slide-show was being presented. A warm sigh escaped my lungs at the familiarity of the place. The sound of my steps changed as I went from the gravel to the linoleum floor beneath the glow of red lights.

San Miguel Church

I was almost hyperventilating as I waited in the foyer of the church. Everyone was waiting for the signal from Father Andy to start down the aisle. The music started to drift our way from the front of the church and I saw Father waving his hand – the signal to start the procession. Even though it was completely hollow, the 8 foot tall wooden cross felt heavy in my hands. The First Holy Communion ceremony had taken place just last week and this was my first time serving in Mass. I was scared. The high ceilings I had grown up with seemed different now as I carried the Cross down the aisle. The people in the pews were staring at me, but I did not look at them. I was a new server, so I was close enough to a heart attack as it was. As we reached the altar at the end of the aisle, I could see my parents waving at me and mouthing the words “Good job.” I smiled. When I looked back and saw Father bowing his head, I knew it was time to put the Cross in its wooden stand at the corner of the two thick adobe walls. Walls that stand resolute after witnessing mass for 400 years.

Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Biking down the hard dirt road, smelling the fresh Cottonwood trees and hearing their golden brown leaves crunch under my bike, I push hard on my pedals. I blast down through the aisle of trees. The chirping of birds and the honking of ducks is interrupted by the sound of a car accelerating and rocketing past me. I pull off on to one of the many observation decks. This one looks out over a pond, with a throng of Sandhill cranes in the middle. I reach down and pluck one of the many cattails below, and start whacking my brother on the head, until our mom tells me to stop. Chucking the used and battered cattail over the rail, I run back to my bike and disappear around the corner into the fresh morning air.