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Christmas Greetings 1967

Jane Claire Dirks-Edmunds

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Christmas 1967

Season's Greetings!

An intricate tapestry of memories remains with us shaped from our experiences--the myriad sights, sounds, smells and impressions of our desert interlude. The surprise and enchantment of Death Valley . sight of our first saguaro cactus . the sighing whisper of wind through spines of a saguaro . vermilion flycatchers in the bird refuge at Patagonia . roadrunners . lush grassland in Rain Valley . wild javelinas in Temporal Canyon . rich, varied colors of logs in Petrified National Forest . the spinniness of cholla cacti . song and nests of the cactus wren . bright colors of pyrrhuloxia and cardinals at Mrs. Goodding's feeder . the novelty of ice on campground tables in Organ Pipe National Monument . driving through falling snow from Tucson to Benson in mid-April . the golden cascade of blossoming palo verde trees . flaming torch-tips of ocotillo blossoms against the sky . sweet fragrance of Phoenix orange blossoms . seemingly incessant wind . picnicking in Peralta Canyon of the storied Superstition Mountains and seeing the Weaver's Needle . Boothill at Tombstone . Lavender Pit Copper Mine at Bisbee . Fort Huachuca . cactus blossoms . patterns of both wind and water erosion . vegetation zones in the Chiricahua Mountains--from desert to Douglas fir at 8,000 feet . mesquite . thorns . Mormon tea . miles and miles of soilless, gravelly creosotebush flats . a desert walk among tall yuccas under billowy, after-rain clouds . Oak Creek Canyon and red-rock-bounded Sedona . Tuzigoot . Jerome . intense colors, boldly-sculptured buttes, red sands, trading posts, hogans, Navajo rugs, silver and turquoise jewelry of Navajoland . Two Gun Town where the camper rocked all night in a wind-and-dust storm . the clear, clean, pine-scented air at Lakeside in the White Mountain area . mile-high Prescott . the dwarfing vastness of Grand Canyon . Pipe Spring Fort . white-tailed Kaibab squirrels . the Great White Throne of Zion (National Park) . the Mormon Tabernacle and Temple Square at Salt Lake City . Bonneville Salt Flats . . all these any many, many more experiences comprise the memory record of our desert "year".

Leaving here February 10--for many reasons much later than planned--we (Ray, J.C., and Timidity the "pup") traveled by Chinook camper in Oregon, California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada more than 7,000 miles and took many pictures before we arrived back home on May 13! Practically everywhere we went, to our sorrow, time seemed to vanish!

Visits with relatives and friends enroute were enjoyed immensely, but two couples deserve special laurels for their hospitality during extended periods. First, two very dear ladies quite literally saved our lives for "we were strangers and they took us in." "Tiny" Standard and her artist sister Ruth Powers let us stay at Tiny's place up Wild Grape Canyon at Inyokern in the northern part of the Mojave Desert of California for a week while Ray was ill. They made it possible for him to obtain needed antibiotics, befriended us in many ways, and also taught us much about Mojave plant and animal life.

At St. David, in the San Pedro valley of southeastern Arizona--an area once productive grassland but now too largely eroded desert through man's mismanagement and greed--Mr. and Mrs. L. N. Goodding, Ray's friends of many years, shared their home with us for the greater part of two months, advising and encouraging us in our expeditions. Fascinating birds came to Mrs. Goodding's feeder, and we learned about many others through her assistance. From Mr. Goodding we obtained a varied and most useful knowledge of desert flora and conservation such as can be gained only from an observant long-time student of these subjects. Shortly after our departure from St. David, the Gooddings moved to the Phoenix area. We have been greatly saddened to learn recently of Mr. Goodding's passing.

On our trip we came to understand that Nature's desert is a wondrous place, adequately--if not abundantly--supplied with life, all beautifully adapted to survive in this special kind of environment. We learned to appreciate the desert's beauty and grandeur. We became aware, too, that the most barren places--those most nearly devoid of life, hence desert in the "classic" sense--are man-made, Nature's balance having been drastically upset in these areas.

At home, the summer was the driest on record for our area. We had much sunshine and more hot days than normal. Through it all Ray was plagued with severe rheumatoid arthritis which finally let up late in the summer. We made progress on the house to the extent that our dining-room is now more comfortable and presentable. We had a good garden--except that nutria cleaned out our corn patch. With the opening of college, Jane Claire resumed her dual responsibilities. However, the addition of Dr. James Crook to the Biology Department staff made possible a somewhat lighter teaching load for her this semester--just two upper division courses (Ecology and Comparative Anatomy-Embryology).

Our travels of last year leave us with a cherished hope that some time in the future another expedition may be logged.

As we embark on the uncharted New Year, our wish for all of you is that compassionate LOVE of family . friends . home . homeland . mankind . God . may be your ANCHOR, HOPE your COMPASS, FAITH your GUIDING STAR.

The Edmundses