

Las Cruces, New Mexico

January 5-8. I attended a mathematical conference held in a pecan-ranch-retreat-conference center run by Franciscan monks. The beginning of January is the harvesting season for the nuts. The trees are shaken by a vibrator, the nuts fall to the ground and then are swept up. Then they are accumulated in a large pile, like coal, for processing. I was surprised to find that the pecan has a thick outer shell which is discarded. What we normally think of as the outer shell is really an inner shell. Neat packaging by nature.

I walked through cotton fields. This part of the country raises three things: cotton, pecans, and chili peppers; an odd combination. Went to the town of Old Mesilla, about four miles from the ranch. Very small. Built around a central square. Picturesque enough to

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be a movie set, complete with the Town Bum hanging around the corner store. This is the town where Billy the Kid was tried. "The name of the wicked shall rot". So says the Book of Proverbs. If only it were true; it is generally converted into a Gift Shoppe. That's what the courtroom now is , so I bought a picture post card.

I came back to the ranch for some talks .The monks (there weren't that many of them) were buzzing around cheerfully. Went into the retreat library. Poked around in a book called "Imitatio Christi and the Monastic Ideal". Nothing in it on how to run a motel-conference center. Poked around in an article entitled "The Influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Western Mysticism" (Note: not The West ). Thought about St. Francis. If he were here, he would talk to the trees: Brother Almond, Sister Pecan, Friend Chili Pepper.

I left the library and read a plaque describing the main building of the retreat. It was built in the early 1900's by a wealthy consumptive Californian who found plenty of goats' milk in the vicinity. On the way back to the airport at El Paso, Texas, I looked across the Rio Grande and saw Mexico.



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third prize eventually.

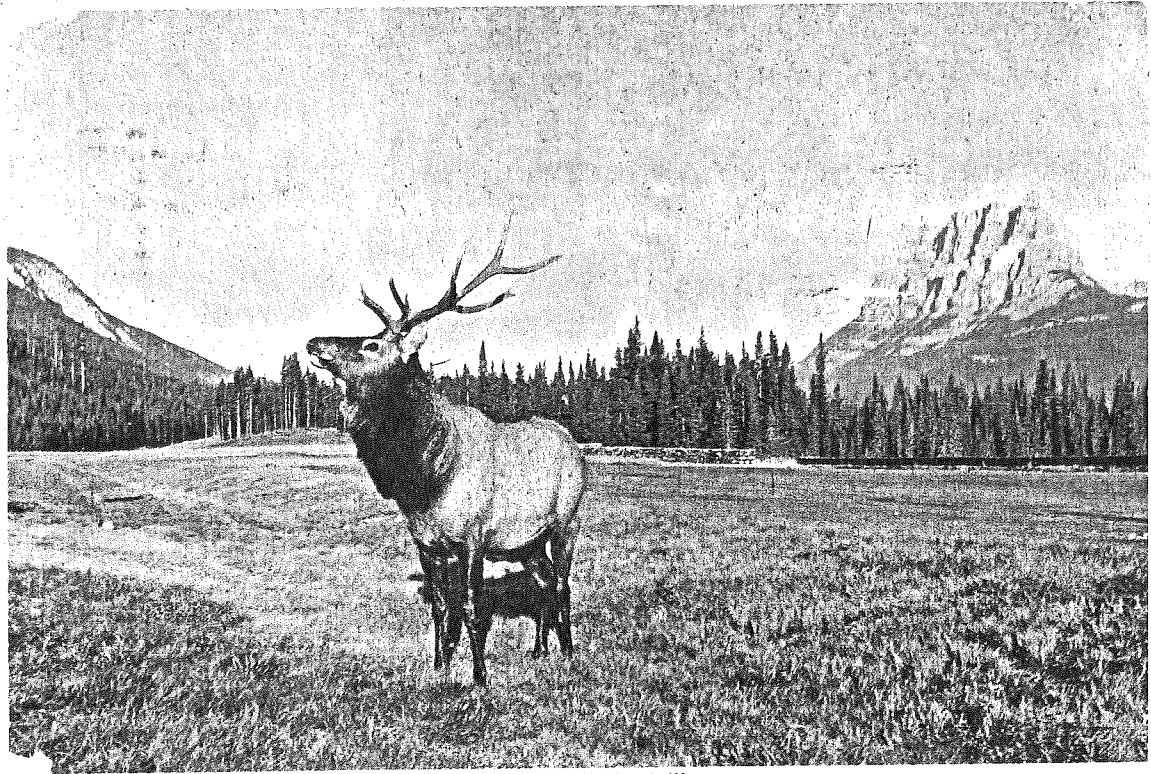
We've driven up here for a high-school hockey game in Idaho Falls. My friend Frank's son Martin is on the Salt Lake team. The game will be held at night in the open. A bonfire is lit to warm the spectators. I assume that half of the parents will be lit as well.

Idaho Falls, Idaho

January 15th. Colder than cold. But, as they say up here, it's a dry cold, and you don't notice it. At least until your ears and nose drop off you don't.

I am staying in a motel adjacent to the Snake River falls. The ducks and geese are splashing around in the ice stalactites and I've put on my long johns. Across the river there is a Mormon Temple built in the Inca style. Note: a Temple, where advanced ceremonies go on, not just a ward church.

There is an attraction of Idaho Falls which is probably in no guide book. On one side of the river near the falls is a park and in the park a stone tablet. On the stone tablet are inscribed the Ten Command-



*Bull Elk "Wapiti"*

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ments, and above them is an abbreviated version written in Archaic Hebraic Script (not the usual letters that one sees around). On the bottom of the tablet is engraved:

"Presented to the City of Idaho Falls by the Idaho State Aerie and Auxiliary Fraternal Order of Eagles, June, 1969."

On the drive back the scenery is of the "craters of the moon" variety. We passed the lava flows of eons ago. Frank pointed out a spot on the highway where he hit an elk two years ago.

Malad City, Idaho

January 17. The name means sick in French. Some French Canadian trapper must have eaten something bad here a hundred and fifty years ago. At 4:30 P.M. we stopped for lunch at a local cafe and thinking to be on the safe side, I ordered breakfast. The cook and waitress were fat, a good sign.