

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT; IT'S FALL IN PLACITAS

Yes, it's fall in Placitas. The mulberry bush outside the window behind my computer has turned yellow. I'm staring at the wood pile under the junipers and the huge hunk of cottonwood which has Dick's axe laying artistically on top of it ready for splitting wood for tonight's fire. And we will have one, I'm sure. In fact he's out there right now selecting the right mix of woods. (Could this be a subtle message that he's hungry and I should begin cooking?) We have already had several cozy dinners in front of a mellow, but sparkling, fire in the living room kiva fireplace. Our wood pile consists of pinon, a little precious oak, juniper (from the trees which got battered by last winter's snows) and wondrously dry latillas cut in handy lengths by Leon and Avery—unbelievably good fire starters having been baked by the sun for fifteen years or so while providing a shaded area by the pool. There are now new latillas sprouting from the north side of the pool house roof, but alas the pool was closed up for the winter today. So sad as the surrounding gardens are truly lovely right now; roses, snap dragons and chrysanthemums giving their last best shot for the year. Yesterday, the geraniums, also blooming exuberantly, were moved into the sunroom just as the first snow flakes began blowing by. I had my enthusiastic and faithful young helpers Ariel, Gabriel, and Isabel Niforatos pushing and pulling those heavy clay pots until they submitted to their winter location. We rewarded ourselves for a job well done by enjoying the season's first tea party complete with silver teapot and Lenox eggshell tea cups in front of the fire, while reminiscing about the Mad Hatter's tea party and Alice in Wonderland, of course.

Snow caps the Sangre de Cristo Mountains today, and there is a dusting of white on the Sandias. Pat Wallwork and I climbed up through the Ojo de Orno to the North Crest Trail Sunday morning. The wind was relentless, and it was rather chilly. Pat, neatly bundled up in rugged but stylish windbreaker, snug hood and mittens: "Where, and when, do you think we intersect with the ridge trail?" Lucy: "Over there where that cloud is blowing by, I think. Phew, it's cold. I'm glad I have my silk gloves, ski hat, and scarf. It helps to keep the extremities warm." When we did get to the cloud (well—we didn't really get quite that far), we had to decide whether to risk blowing off the cliff or not. We decided we were tough cookies and descended the loop as intended. We didn't blow off the cliff—thank you resident wind gods. Actually there were some spots that were strangely and unexpectedly sheltered, and the sun intermittently warmed our backs. It wasn't picnic weather; pink cheek weather, it was. It was marvelous looking down on Gringo Gulch and the cottonwoods by Las Huertas Creek, Tunnel Springs and its golden leaves, and in fact the entire Village in color. It's pretty easy to see where the water is around here. The deciduous trees tell the story.

The other thing that happened this weekend is that I finished reading a dog training book. This Cesar Millan guy. Have you seen his TV show? I haven't. But he has a pack of 47 dogs he is leader of. I dunno—seems a little much. I suppose he knows something. Well, the book is a skip along sort, but it does give the all much too sweet dog owner a clue about being a proper PACK LEADER. So I've been trying to take my dogs for proper walks, which means me leading them. Well, they sit down and I have to drag them unless they are out front. I try to get them to understand that I go through the front door first. I'm told I must put them to work. Since they are terriers, I could bury a few dirty socks and play "go find." But let's face it, they've already found everything that smells good. And they have no clue whatsoever that Dick and I pay the mortgage and buy the dog food.

Have you seen the wild turkeys? We had four of them in our cottonwood tree several nights in a row. They are huge! The puppies spent much time trying to get at them 60 feet up. They tried to climb a Juniper to see if it would help them get there. Not successful. Poor babies, craning their little necks and leaping in the air all day. I also found it terribly exciting. I couldn't persuade myself to leave the house the first morning until they flew off which wasn't until 8:30 AM, the lazy creatures.

Now just in case you think your local Realtor is goofing off too much these days (and perhaps I do feel a little guilty for having so much fun), I did hold an open house between the hike and the tea party. Unfortunately I didn't sell that house, but I made some significant progress towards selling a few other pieces of real estate here and there. I'm on the ball folks. I promise.

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