



*Jicarilla Apache girls quietly watch gathering of their tribe for annual fiesta. We came early, parked our trailer in the encampment in a site of our choice. (Over white foreground tent, right.)*

towns aren't the only places we've enjoyed trailering to on the desert. Tucked back in a mountain valley of New Mexico are the Cities That Died of Fear, a little chain of native settlements whose names are musical and bewildering to spell. Early Spanish ways of life still go on in Chilili, Tajique, Torreon and Manzano, four of the living legendary cities. The other three, Abo, Gran Quivira and Quarri have only the dead ruins of mission churches to show where padres worked to bring a new God to the pueblo Indians. These seven villages were once the homes of the Tigua Indians who farmed the rich valley fields. But the Apaches raided the villages, one by one. Fear caused the people to abandon their homes and flee to other New Mexico pueblos. Later, some of them returned to resettle the towns, many of which big-name explorers of the 16th and 17th centuries mention in their chronicles.

We found old and picturesque Manzano, the place of the ancient apple orchards, the most fascinating. It lies

in the low, cedar-furred hills of the Manzano mountains. Here the adobe houses wear their narrow porches like balconies which open into flower-filled patios. Carved deep-set doors and corner fireplaces tell you change is not welcome here.

With water from Manzano's creek-size spring the people cultivate abundant corn and bean crops. It waters, too, the apple orchards the padres are said to have planted 200 years ago.

On fall days we watched families thresh beans in clean-swept yards. Many of the people here use the old method of threshing—that of riding a horse over the pods to tramp out the frijoles. This tedious way of winter preparation goes well with the gentle and courteous manner of life here. Manzanoans live close to the soil and close to the church. A mellow-toned mission bell marks their time of day, morning, noon and night—many more times on saint's days and Sundays. It was during the pinyon harvest that this bell became important to us. Every sunset we'd wait for its

last melancholy notes to drift away. Then out of canyoncitos and deep arroyos came whole families and their pinyon loaded burros. Everybody—grownups and children—carried bulging nut-filled sacks. It was like the satisfactory ending of a play—a kind of humble pageantry with harvesters going home. And soon the odor of pinyons roasting hung over the village like incense at an altar.

We like dropping back to the old Spanish ways of these kind people. To share a marriage letter. To attend a christening or a gran baile.

We think our trailer life on the desert is one of the richest experiences we can ever have. Just to marvel at its wonders all the way from Chihuahua up to where it stops and cools off in Colorado. The Salton Sea and New Mexico's White Sands. The Papago's primitive Rabbit-Ear country. The Mojaves and their desert. Old towns like Ft. Sumner, Lincoln and Trampas. These places and a mapful more help us to know and understand the desert's people, its bigness and its freeness.