

In the summer of 1939, during one of the five-month layoffs from her textile job, Margaret made a life-changing trip to New Mexico. What triggered her decision to go was her desire to visit friends who had moved to New Mexico, and her interest in exploring the country of her birth.

I was in my early thirties and I said to myself, "I'm going to take a car and travel all over America."<sup>132</sup> I had an extraordinary friend, Dr. Rudolph Kieve. He was a German Jewish refugee. I met him in New York City the first week he'd come from Europe to escape the Nazis.<sup>133</sup> I liked him instantly. He was the only psychiatrist here in New Mexico, at that time, and chief psychiatrist at the State Mental Hospital, which in those days was called an insane asylum.

Rudy had been studying in Heidelberg, Germany, when the Nazis came. He was Jewish and his family was wealthy, so they had to flee. They left everything and got out. They ran to Egypt and were in Alexandria for a while. But that wasn't right for him. He was becoming a doctor. So he went to Milan, Italy, and got his medical degree. He also got his degree in psychiatry in Italy. He was a brilliant man.

Then he came to the States. He got a job immediately as an intern in one of the New York hospitals. But less than a month later, the State of New York passed a law that prohibited all refugee doctors from practicing in New York unless they went back to medical school in the U.S.<sup>134</sup> Well, Rudy decided to leave New York. So he went from state to state to state. Everywhere he went the same thing happened. He ended up in Oklahoma and the same thing happened there. But in Oklahoma he became associated with a group of doctors who had enough confidence in him to underwrite him, and he was able to work. That's how he met Alice Marriott. She was engaged to the chief doctor in that particular group. And that's how, eventually, I got to know Alice.

Rudy was a very strange man, but I loved him dearly. I thought he was wonderful. He wrote a book about twins. I've forgotten the name of it. It was published and got a very good review in the *New York Times*. The book could have been written by Thomas Mann. Rudy was very gifted.<sup>135</sup>

Then Rudy married a friend of mine. I was thinking of marrying him and he was thinking of marrying me because we liked each other enormously, but I was living with someone else [Raymond Elton Schoonover], who happened to have the greatest bookshop on Lexington Avenue in New York City, and I was intrigued. We were very good friends and cared for each other, and I wasn't about to jump out of one situation into another. So when Marjorie fell in love with Rudy, she came to me and said, "This man is for me. He's attracted to you. You like him

but you have someone else. I want this guy and want to marry him." And she did.<sup>136</sup>

I got to know Marjorie because she was taking care of a gallery near the Guild Art Gallery in New York. At lunchtime, she came over and sat in my gallery and ate her lunch. Why? I don't know. But we got to be friends. Marjorie was an artist, but nothing much. I was then, as I have often told McKenzie, intellectually very arrogant and that sometimes is attractive. I think she was attracted by that. Besides I was independent. I'd just come from Europe and I knew everything, you know.

Rudy and Marjorie moved to Roswell, New Mexico. Then he got a job as assistant director at what they then called the insane asylum in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Marjorie's oldest friend, with whom she grew up, was my good friend, Annette Stevens, who later became Annette Rada (or Mrs. Rudy Rada). And Marjorie and Rudy Kieve missed us.<sup>137</sup>

My parents had just come back from Europe, and father wasn't well. The doctor sent him to Miami Beach, Florida. The doctor said, "Florida's climate will help you." So I told my friend, Annette Stevens, who had broken her ankle, that I had decided to drop everything and see the country of my birth. I said, "Look, you just broke your ankle and since you're on workmen's compensation, find out if you can get your money at various places." She could, so she came with me.

I had a three- or four-year-old Dodge my father had given me, a car he'd only used for short trips, that was buried in the hay in the barn in the Catskills, in Hunter, New York. We uncovered the car and had it towed to the local garage. They cleaned it up a bit, put some oil in it, a new battery, fired it up and away we went. The only bad part was that the mice had taken a liking to the upholstery; especially the back seat, which was an absolute mess. The only things left were the springs. The front seat wasn't too bad.<sup>138</sup> So we got into the car and set out for New Mexico.

We went first to Florida because my parents were in Miami and I wanted to see them. Franklin Scace from Richmond Pond, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, decided he'd come with us. He had just come back from a trip to Miami. He didn't even unpack his suitcase. He got into my car and went back to Miami with us. Things were so different in Miami then.

We stayed with Mom and Pop and then went to the Everglades. Then we went up the west coast of Florida and into Louisiana and Texas and somehow we got to New Mexico. Did we get a surprise! Texas was enormous and different. We finally got to Amarillo. Today it is a large city. Then it was only one big road in the middle of what today is the city. We stayed at a cheap hotel. I was living on fifteen dollars a week. Annette had her workmen's compensation, and we managed.

The car was economical. We did a lot of coasting. You'd be surprised. Texas is not that flat, I found out. We saw everything we could. I should write that history. It was terribly funny. We got to Las Vegas, New Mexico, on June 9, 1939, and found that Rudy and Marjorie were living in the institution behind locked doors. I remember walking into the very small apartment they had there in the midst of everything, with bolts and locks. There I saw these wildly primitive *santos* with everything dripping with blood. Up until the time of his death, Rudy had one of the great collections of *santos*. Coming from France and looking at that kind of thing, it was wild to me and a tremendous shock.

As Margaret described, Rudy Kieve was well educated in all of the arts—literature, music, painting, sculpture and philosophy. Apparently, he also knew everyone there was to know in New Mexico at the time. He was Margaret's calling card while she was there. He wanted to introduce her to all of the people he knew because she had lived in Europe and was educated there, which was intriguing to people living in New Mexico then. Everyone was delighted to meet Margaret, and they all had a lot to talk about.<sup>139</sup>

When we got to Las Vegas, we couldn't stay in the insane asylum where Rudy and Marjorie lived in locked quarters. They only had two or three rooms, and Rudy had been collecting all these *santos*. They also had a lot of kittens jumping all over us. It was no place to stay.

So we stayed in town in the heart of Las Vegas and they made arrangements for us to eat in the local cafe. We never had food like that. The first time I tasted it, I hit the ceiling. Hot. I was used to French food, in which everything was delicate. What a rude awakening. I said to Rudy and Marjorie that I loved it here and that it was just darling. I also did a couple of paintings. But I decided I had to get out.

Rudy and Marjorie Kieve told Margaret that they had a friend in Taos who had a house in town. They suggested that the house be rented for Margaret and Annette. So on June 16, Annette and Margaret went with them to see it. The friend was Frieda Lawrence, D. H. Lawrence's wife. The house was the town house that Angelino Ravagli, Frieda's lover, had built in town, on the plain near Taos Pueblo, about twelve miles from their ranch on the side of Lobo Mountain. Frieda and Angelino used it during the harsh winters when the mountain ranch house was snowed in and completely inaccessible.

We rented it for maybe thirty dollars for the month of July, or maybe fifty dollars for two months. When I looked at it, I said, "My gawd!" It was dirty. Well, I didn't realize that it was full of adobe dust, which happens when an adobe house is empty for a long time. It wasn't built the way my house was built later on. When Angelino built it,

he didn't do a good job. There was a well there, but it was brackish. Potable water was six miles away.

So on July 1, when we moved there, I cleaned the house because Annette couldn't stand housework. She went off to the village and had a good time in Taos.<sup>140</sup> But that's how I met W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman. On July 4, when I was through cleaning, who should walk in but Marjorie and Rudy and in tow they had a young Englishman, very dour, with a sixteen-year-old chap. That was W. H. Auden with the sixteen-year-old, Chester Kallman.<sup>141</sup>

Margaret wrote about meeting Auden in her 1992 article, "Auden in the Southwest," for *El Palacio, Magazine of the Museum of New Mexico* (Vol. 98, No. 1). As she recalled

Auden was traveling as tutor and paid companion to Chester Kallman. Chester, a boy of sixteen or so, whose health was not strong, had been a student of Auden's. His father, a Brooklyn dentist, had sent his son to the desert climate in the hope that his condition, as well as his English, would improve...

Auden's marriage to Erika Mann, daughter of Thomas Mann, was only a few weeks or months old — I know only that it had taken place that year—but Marjorie's reference to the event was the only one we would hear; Auden never mentioned it...

Having been apprised by Thomas Mann of the arrival of his son-in-law in Taos, the Kieves met Auden and Chester at the bus station in the center of the village. All four then drove to the Lawrence town house, arriving just as I had finished cleaning it.<sup>142</sup>

As Margaret related in various interviews

Auden came in, looked at me and said, "This is mine. I rented it." I said, "You did? Well, I just paid the rent on it to Mrs. Lawrence." He said that he'd written to her. It developed that she had written him back, told him how much it would be and he never answered. But he came out to Taos with Chester Kallman, who was then his student, and who was learning all about English—and a lot of other things. Auden was furious. Frieda and Angelino lived on top of the mountain, and this house was on the outskirts of Taos. Well, they couldn't get up the mountain because it was too late and too dangerous a drive up the steep mountain road at night.

So, of course, I invited them for dinner. I didn't have much money, but I went down to the Indian shop about two miles away and picked up six little steaks. I told Marjorie to fire up the stove. We had lots of pinion wood. She put it in the stove and I cooked the steaks. God knows what else I made. We had dinner, all of us together.