

"I was active in the Oxford University labor club. At one point I wanted to be a social worker. I think I've become very skeptical of authority, of business, of nuclear power. My brother-in-law is a philosopher, and I remember saying to him that 'all killing is wrong.' But I think I was more verbally contemplating an idea than stating a belief. [I have felt] anger that [the atomic bomb] was used, but I don't blame the people who were making it."

In fact, these people have a very special place in Gaby's memory: "Looking back, I have realized that you don't meet people like [the scientists at Los Alamos]. They were really nice as well as smart, really warm people. I've never come across [so] many adults like that in one place. They were quick at understanding, knew a lot and had wide interests. They had a sense of humor and an ability to admit it when they were wrong. I think I've had a sense since then that adults don't quite measure up."

Jane Flanders Ziff

For Jane Flanders Ziff, a mother and grandmother who teaches music in Amherst, Massachusetts, the move to Los Alamos was at first "the stuff that an adolescent dream is made of"—a trip to a secret place in the desert where the family could be reached only through a post office box. The adventure soon turned into "a big confusion" in which she felt alone, alienated, and frightened. Jane arrived in Los Alamos in 1943, a year ahead of Nella and Gaby. Although she was just Nella's age, she was socially precocious. At ages 12 and 13 she felt that she just didn't belong. She was full of hopes, longings, and confusion. The possibilities seemed so romantic—and so unreachable.

"We came in 1943 when I was 12, and the place was still new. . . . We came from Chappaqua, New York, where the schools were very good and everybody was academically oriented. It was a place where it was cool to be good. . . . My mother came from an old Quaker family in Chappaqua. My father was a mathematician at New York University. They were originally pacifists. My father had studied with Harald Bohr, Niels Bohr's brother, in Denmark in 1937. I remember when we were in Denmark, my mother wrote a letter to Roosevelt saying that we shouldn't start arming, [that] it was a bad precedent. . . .

"I think that [by 1943] my parents had come to terms with war. . . . The invasion of Denmark [affected them]. . . . My family was very WASPy from way back, but we had a great many close friends [who were refugees]. We had a German refugee staying with us. . . . And it was really believed that this was going to shorten the war. . . . My brother was at Harvard at the

time. He was never allowed at Los Alamos. . . . Any [family member] who did not come originally was not allowed.

"I was very much looking forward to the desert. We took the train. It was terribly crowded. There were soldiers. In Chicago there was a big wait—it was hard to travel during the war, and we never did get breakfast, I remember that. I remember seeing the mountains suddenly appear. . . . The guardhouse was the most impressive thing. . . . And then we were fingerprinted, and that was very romantic. . . . I remember it was so impressive getting this pass. . . . I was fascinated by the landscape and did a lot of walking. My father got me into hiking. We climbed all the mountains around. . . .

"We had a Sundt apartment . . . facing the school. You could hear the bell and walk out. The school was quite a revelation to me. I had always been trying to keep up with some sort of mysterious, terribly respectable, and rather wealthy standard. To be in a place where the kids were undisciplined, not used to thinking in terms of school—I had never been in that kind of class before. . . . To Nella it was a big adventure. To me it was a big confusion—a big confusion, being presented with things that I couldn't handle. . . . It's not that I didn't feel it was a big adventure. I certainly did, but it was just beyond my ability to handle. . . .

"There was no social life of my age group. It did not exist. . . . In the high school there were one or two [scientists' children] in a class. The rest were technicians' children. . . . The Texas construction worker culture—that's who was in my class—and that's part of why school was so unfamiliar to me. It was not the white upper-middle-class like Chappaqua. In Los Alamos, at study hall if the teacher would go out of the room, everybody would throw things. In Chappaqua, they might have been reading comics, but at least decorum was observed. . . .

"I learned not to go to school. . . . I jumped out of the window after they called roll. They had this weird system of calling roll in the morning and the afternoon. I discovered that all you had to do was be there for roll call, then you could go to the bathroom and go out the window.

"[The year before Nella came] I had this wonderful friend Barbara who introduced me to flirting with soldiers. She left after a year. After Barbara left, I used to do it by myself. I used to neck with [the soldiers]. That was what I spent my time doing. It made me feel immensely guilty and filled with all kinds of desire. . . . It was an innocent enough age that the soldiers knew they were dealing with a young girl and were protective. . . . But I felt terribly guilty. I felt I was doing awful things.

"The Clines [friends of my parents] had a horse, and they encouraged me to exercise the horse. One of the things I used to do—I would go out and ride the horse and meet with the MP of the day, whoever it was. I had one I used to meet there all the time. There were MPs who came and did the

inspections all around, sort of security patrol. I would lie in wait for them and flirt with them. . . .

"There was a bus that we could take into Santa Fe. I used to love to sit in the courtyard of the La Fonda [the main hotel in Santa Fe and a favorite gathering place of the scientists] and read. I would take the bus in, and of course the bus would be full of soldiers. I had read in *This Week Magazine* about a technique in which you look from under your lashes and how it's very come hither. And I found that it worked. It was very interesting. . . .

"Nella's father had a coterie of young scientists about him. . . . Nella and I would talk about with whom we were in love. But this whole undercurrent [of longings and confusions] didn't exist for her. She was happy to just be in love with somebody. I couldn't bear it, it was terribly painful for me. . . . I felt I was unable to belong to anything. I was too young to [socialize] with the scientists, though I fell in love and necked with them, too. But I realized they wouldn't take me seriously because I was so young. I also knew—because one was very conscious of social order—that the soldiers with whom I was necking did not belong to the right class, that I couldn't bring them home. It was a very painful time. . . .

"Had I been at home, I have a feeling I would have learned to be with the group. But to be displaced in this exaggerated romance of the science, of intelligence, of the glorification of smart people—and to be part of them, except that I wasn't; to be a child, except that I wasn't. It was a very, very hard thing. I knew my mother had no understanding [of what I was going through]. I was already quite alienated from her. I knew she couldn't help me. All she could do would be to be horrified. . . . I didn't want to be in this awful quagmire of longings that I didn't know how to handle. . . .

"I remember that the results of IQ tests in the school showed that Nella and I . . . had about the same IQ, but that Gaby was much smarter. . . . Gaby's mother was a terror. She used to tell Laura [Fermi] what to do. She was always giving Laura orders about how to handle me and Nella. . . .

"There was an interesting combination of really interesting teachers. Alice Smith was a terrific teacher. Jane Wilson was interesting and absolutely goofy. Jane had a big influence on me. She made us memorize all kinds of second-rate poetry. It's such fun because I have this memorized second-rate poetry in my head which I can go through in my mind.

"My family were musical. . . . I think we brought our piano. My father had a quartet, and my parents always had people in the house doing music. . . . The Indian culture was something that was respected and regarded as exotic. . . . Maria came to school and gave a pottery demonstration. . . . It had a big impression on me. I used to make pots by the coil method for a long time. . . . I'd never seen it before and it was very special. . . .

"[My stay in Los Alamos] was a concentrated time of being with people under rather special circumstances where the relationships and your experi-

ences are separated from the rest of your life. . . . I've never been back. . . . I think . . . [about] . . . how strong the social classes [were] on who was smart and who wasn't, who was a scientist and who wasn't. And not being a scientist myself, never having been a scientist, I have the feeling if I went back there I wouldn't have any status at all."

Emma Baca Knowles

It was a cold night in April 1944 when the Baca family arrived at the guard gate at Los Alamos. "The reason I remember the cold," recalls Emma, who was 16 at the time, "is that our passes were not ready so we had to sit all night in the car." The family consisted of Emma, her four brothers and sisters, her father who had gotten a carpentry job at Los Alamos, and her mother, expecting her sixth child (who would be born 20 July in the small barracks hospital).

As she sat waiting for the sun to rise, Emma had little idea of the changes that this muddy hilltop would make in her life. Many years later Emma tells her story from her office in Santa Fe, where she works as financial specialist for the Emergency Medical Services Bureau of the New Mexico Department of Health.

"That brief time in high school made a big difference. It was a completely new environment for me, and I think it made a difference in whatever I did with the rest of my life. . . . There were a lot of things . . . that I didn't know were out there before I came to Los Alamos. . . . The thing about these brainy kids—and that's what they all were to me—was that they were generally pretty nice. Just because they had brains, they didn't have to be ugly. And they weren't. . . . What a breakthrough to see these other kids. . . . We were friends and we could talk. I couldn't talk about the things they did, but I sure listened. . . .

"Nella was younger. . . . I met her through school. . . . She was pleasant, and she wanted to be friends. . . . I remember her [in her baggy sweaters]. . . . Her mother must have knit her sweaters. . . . Nella read a lot and had so many interests and interesting things to talk about. . . . The [Fermis] had me over for dinner. . . . They lived in one of the nice houses—we lived in a terrible place. . . . I remember that. . . . So, of course. . . .