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(or, with the almost four pages of Smiths and Chavezes, at the top of each column) in boldface all caps, with the given names, addresses, and phone numbers indented in a list beneath; a blue-page section of governmental listings—city, county, state, federal, tribal and outlying communities; and a white-page business listing, in addition to the Yellow Pages, arranged in alphabetical order with no advertisements.

These ingenuities make the new directory actually handy to use. One can find a Wainio wedged between a Waindt and a Wainman without having to prowl the page with one's finger. One doesn't have to second-guess the compilers trying to remember where the listings for state government are, under "state" or "New Mexico." And one can even find *Century* with relative ease in the white business pages by circling the proximity of "Century 21."

The phone company says some 292,000 copies of the new directory have been delivered. Another 128,000 are waiting new customers or old ones who want an extra or two. The new design was developed, a Mountain Bell spokesperson said, by AT&T, and was first introduced last year in Salt Lake City.

In a day and age when simplicity itself is often made complex, it is pleasant to witness someone (or some corporate body) forge ahead and do something straightforwardly useful. If one consults a telephone directory hundreds of times a year as we do, an improvement in its design can mean a perceptible easing in one's daily quotient of petty bothers and harassments. And that is a useful pleasure that deserves some praise.

The Saguaro

Saguaro cactuses are common in our landscape in southern Arizona. One stands in our yard. It's about thirty feet tall and almost two feet in diameter. Its fluted green stem is covered with clusters of sharp gray spines. Woodpeckers have drilled two-inch holes in it here and there, and these are inhabited each spring by families of starlings and cactus wrens.

My saguaro is about seventy years old. Saguaros sprout arms at 65 years of age and the arms on ours appeared five years ago. One at a time, they burst through the cuticle as spiny, silver-dollar-sized knobs twenty feet above the

ground. They curved sharply upward as they grew, and they will eventually reach the top of the stem in height. They are almost as big around as the stem itself.

Each April the stem and arms sport crowns of flowers, creamy white and so waxy as to seem to be made of paraffin. They don't all bloom at once, fortunately, since they remain open only from evening until the following afternoon. They are visited by doves, hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies, all eager to



drink the one-sixth ounce of nectar deep in the flower cup. At night bats and moths come by for their share.

The ripening of the saguaro fruit in May or early June marks the beginning of the Pima and Papago Indian new year. These people traditionally gather the two-inch, oval fruits, using the woody ribs of dead saguaros as poles to knock them down. The fruit is then fermented to make a sweet beverage which the people drink during their new year's celebrations.

I don't harvest the fruit on my saguaro, however, and in time it splits to expose the bright-red interior. The opened fruits look so much like flowers that many casual observers are convinced that saguaro flowers are red.

The fruit isn't spiny, so ground squirrels, coyotes, and many birds find easy pickings from the fallen morsels. These animals carry the oil-rich seeds in their digestive systems for distances from a few feet to several miles. If a seed is deposited in a shady spot, say under a mesquite or palo verde tree, it may germinate with the summer rains.

Few things grow as slowly as a saguaro seedling. At two years of age it is only a quarter-inch high, but it has a crown of spines to help protect it from pack rats and other desert rodents which relish its succulent flesh. If it survives the hazards of predation and summer rains (which may wash it away), in fifteen years it reaches a height of about a foot. Then it is well on its way to maturity, being at that size almost invulnerable to attack, and it could live for as long as 200 years.

Saguaros serve as homes for many

desert animals. Gila woodpeckers drill holes in the stems to use as nests, and they raise their broods in the cool, moist interiors, using no other nesting materials. They use each hole only once; each year they drill a new one. Almost all mature saguaros have several of these openings in the stem and arms. Old woodpecker holes are used by a variety of animals. Cactus wrens and starlings may return to the same hole year after year and may raise two or more families each spring. Cactus mice find the ready-made homes inviting, and reach them by using the spines as ladders. Occasionally an industrious mouse may construct a spiral staircase around the stem by chewing its way around the fleshy column. Wasps, honeybees, and bats also nest in old woodpecker holes.

The saguaro is a shallow-rooted plant. Its roots reach out as far as fifty feet, but they are only six to twenty inches below the soil surface. When the ground is soft, as it is during the gentle winter rains, the roots sometimes provide insufficient anchorage for the massive stem, and a strong wind may blow it over. The wind in southern Arizona is usually light, however, and the ground is usually dry and hard.

The saguaro is a plant well adapted to take advantage of the light rainfall. At the first hint of soil moisture, the roots sprout hundreds of thousands of water-absorbing root hairs, and the saguaro soaks up water like a sponge. The accordion-pleated stem expands until the pleats almost vanish. The giant cactus uses this stored water during the long and frequent droughts.

The saguaro, *Cereus giganteus*, occurs only in the Sonoran Desert. In Arizona, where it is the state flower, it is protected by law. Nonetheless, the giant cactus is very popular for landscaping in towns and cities in the southern part of the state. It is relatively easy to transplant at any age, as long as it isn't watered. Alone or in groupings with other desert plants, it is a unique and attractive landscape element in yards, civic areas, and parks.

—VICKI CUTLER

Vicki Cutler is a biologist who lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Science is spectrum analysis: Art is photo-synthesis.

—Karl Kraus

New Mexico's Natural History Museum

We were browsing through back issues of magazines and journals one morning when we came across the 1962 Spring-Summer edition of the *New Mexico Quarterly*. In it was a 75-page supplement entitled "New Mexico's Fossil Record" by distinguished University of New Mexico Professor of Geology Stewart A. Northrop. Dr. Northrop's handsomely crafted survey had been presented a year earlier as UNM's Eighth Annual Research Lecture.

That same morning we read with some anxiety that the proposed New Mexico Museum of Natural History, to be built in Albuquerque, is lacking nearly half of the \$2 million in local matching funds that are required by the state before construction money can be released. Fund raisers and state officials hope to have the money by the first of next month, but that seems unlikely given the present state of the economy.

Although we are enthusiastic about museums in general, it's doubtful that we would feel as strongly disposed toward the new natural history museum as we do if it hadn't been for the coincidence of discovering Dr. Northrop's research lecture. It plainly shows that New Mexico, of all states, deserves a first-rate natural history facility. The fossil record alone makes that abundantly clear. As Dr. Northrop wrote, "Few states can boast of a more complete representation of the geologic column than New Mexico. Every period of the geologic timetable is represented somewhere in the state by rocks containing fossils. During the past century the rocks of New Mexico have yielded... more than 3,300 species of plants, invertebrates, and vertebrates, extending back over a span of 500 million years. More than 100 new genera and approximately 700 new species have been founded on New Mexico type specimens."

Dr. Northrop quoted the eminent paleontologist George G. Simpson, who in 1948 wrote of the San Juan Basin that it is "as a whole... one of the most interesting geological regions in the world and contains numerous thrilling chapters of the history of the earth and of life."

New Mexico does indeed deserve a natural history museum. Aside from the respect that knowledge fosters—a respect the New Mexico landscape

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