

1940

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Recommended Citation

Dickens, Elizabeth. "When Albuquerque Saw Shirley." *New Mexico Quarterly* 10, 3 (1940). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol10/iss3/11>

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When Albuquerque Saw Shirley

By ELIZABETH DICKENS

ONLY THE HOME edition of the *Albuquerque Tribune*, which nobody sees much before 3:30, had the news that Shirley Temple would be going through town on the Chief, and the *Tribune* story said that she probably would not appear on the platform. But before the train pulled in at 4:20 mothers and children were scurrying toward the station from all directions. Business men and elderly ladies were proceeding at a more dignified pace, but they were coming all the same.

The *Tribune* had guessed wrong, for Shirley did appear. She stood beside her mother on the platform of her car while the bodyguards went out among the crowd and the press agent talked to reporters. She stood there, faultlessly curled and wearing a typical Shirley Temple dress, and she waved to the crowd and smiled dutifully. Shirley looked practically the same as in pictures, so far as her actual appearance went. She just looked a good deal more bored.

Presently, to a small pond of upstretched hands, Shirley Temple dealt out little cards in lieu of autographs. The cards had her picture on them and each bore the indiscriminate legend:

Love

Shirley Temple

Pretty soon all the cards were handed out and Shirley smiled the smile of a little girl who has done her duty and gestured to the crowd that the cards were gone. But she was wrong about that. Her mother handed her another pack, so she dealt them out too. Dealt them methodically and deliberately, being very careful that she was not giving two cards to any one hand. When Albuquerque's quota of Shirley Temple's love was finally exhausted, children began running through the crowd asking one another if they had gotten

cards. I heard one Negro boy, about thirteen, ask another this question, and the boy he asked hadn't. But the questioner had got a card from Shirley and he had been able to sell it for a nickel. He grinned cheerfully as he said so.

Shirley's car was toward the front of the train and when the people who had been at the wrong end of the platform got to where Shirley was they began telling everyone that Eddie Cantor was on the train too. Down at the other end. Some of the people who had been reaching up for Shirley's cards—and there were about ten adults in the crowd for every child—hurried down the other way. Sure enough, there was Eddie Cantor backed up against a wall and writing autographs like mad. But his crowd didn't compare with Shirley's, though he had a constant, thick little circle around him all the time he was off the train.

Even after her cards were gone the crowd stayed around Shirley, except for short little expeditions down to the end of the platform where Eddie Cantor was. Once a baggage truck with a coffin on it had to be hauled through Shirley's crowd in order to get to the freight elevator and everyone had to move around a little so that the coffin could get through. The freight elevator was almost directly in front of the car platform and everyone, including Shirley and her mother, looked a little embarrassed while the coffin sank lower and lower, almost as into a grave, until it finally was out of sight. Then, down below, it was hauled out to the driveway where the hearse was waiting.

After a little there were shrill, frantic whistles from the baggage truck men who had gathered around the hearse. Finally a man who was standing in the crowd and beaming up at Shirley heard the whistle and looked around, and then his beam changed to a sort of sheepish look. Apparently he belonged with the hearse for he hurried back to it and helped load the coffin in.

The Chief stops in Albuquerque twenty-five minutes, which is why Shirley had time to hand out so many cards, and to wave and smile at the crowd so often. For she

didn't go back into the car at all. Just stood there on the platform beside her mother, with not very much expression on her face but every once in awhile waving or smiling perfunctorily. Whenever it seemed to her, I think, that it was time to wave or smile again. Finally the conductor called, "All aboard! All aboard!" and then there really was some expression on Shirley's face. She looked delighted and she stuck her head out and called, "All aboard! All aboard!" and looked as though she thought she might be doing something a little naughty and was pleased about it.

The conductor, as you may know, always calls "All aboard!" quite a long time in Albuquerque before the train actually pulls out. So many people go to look at the Indians or to buy pottery or silver jewelry or baskets, or bows and arrows to take home to the children. It takes a long time to get them all back on the train. During all the time the conductor was calling "All aboard!" Shirley would chime in with him every once in awhile. But not with the same enthusiasm. She seemed a little discouraged.

Finally, after the conductor had been calling "All aboard" for quite a long while, the Indians came to see Shirley. Usually the Indians stay down by the Indian building. The Pueblo women sit beside their pottery, scolding if people try to take pictures of them without paying a quarter, and the Navajos stay inside and weave rugs so that people from the trains can watch them. At any rate the Indians, whatever they are doing, stay where they are and let people come to see *them*. But this time the Navajos came down the platform to see Shirley. There was an Indian man, not dressed particularly Indianish but carrying a little baby in that wooden business that Indians carry little babies in. There were two Navajo women, dressed in velveteen blouses and the long, full-gathered skirts that missionaries taught the Navajo women to wear a long time ago, and that they have gone on wearing ever since. And there were three little girls, dressed just like their mothers, in velveteen blouses and long, full-gathered skirts. But in spite of their

being dressed like little old Indian women they looked like little girls as they beamed up at Shirley Temple and waved their hands at her. Shirley waved back at them and smiled, but still perfunctorily.

Shirley's press agent told the reporters that his client had wanted to get off the train and go to see the Indians but that she couldn't because the crowd at the station was so large. Maybe he had asked the Indians to come down so that Shirley could see them. I don't know about that. But I don't think the Navajos walk way down the platform to see many people, even if a press agent does ask them to. And I don't think anybody had had to try very hard to get those little Indian girls to go down.

At last the train really did start and soon Shirley was out of sight. But, before the crowd had started to leave, the car that Eddie Cantor was on came along. And there was Eddie Cantor, standing on the platform and waving. He rolled his eyes at Shirley's big crowd of people and everybody laughed, but by that time Shirley Temple's car was way down the tracks, almost under the viaduct.