

## A Visit to the Georgia O'Keefe Museum and Home

by Lavonne Lovstad

Admired by her contemporaries and the world for her innovative art, Georgia O'Keefe has been noted as the leading female artist of Modern Expressionism in America. It is obvious by viewing O'Keefe's paintings at her museum in Santa Fe and by visiting her home in Abiqui that her love of nature was her passion. She lived and breathed the earth, the sky, and all in between.

Many of us, on the pilgrimage, were overwhelmed with the constant changing beauty of the desert. Every several minutes the layers of colored rocks seemed to change hue, with once hidden shadows opening to brilliant light and sagebrush taking on the color of lavender. The shimmering gold cottonwoods lined the Chamba River in all their glory. It was more than we could hold.

Perhaps this is a part of desert spirituality. The fierceness and overwhelming presence of beauty. Of Love itself. Embraced each morning with red mountains on either side of us, we welcomed a new day, a new palette of magnificent color seemingly different than the day before.

There is no doubt in my mind that the celebrated Georgia O'Keefe found an unmatched love here in the desert. Its bigness. Its massiveness. Its irresistible calling. I believe the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe are the story of her soul's journey from the early days of art school and teaching to the last days of her 98 years. The desert, in its fierce love and beauty brought about a stripping of all she had been taught about art and about herself. She became her true self, simplifying and celebrating her life, her environment into fluid, organic lines and shapes of color.

Perhaps like many artists, spiritual authors, and seekers who visit the desert, we, too, are invited to be still, to be aware and reflect on the clutter and attachments in our lives and to let them go. We can allow the black and white of the desert night to transform us into who we really are created to be. We can be willing and open to receive the overwhelming beauty and love of our Creator that is fresh and new each day. And finally, we can be uplifted and free. We can live simply, and respond with gratitude through a multitude of creative expressions.