

# NERVAL'S DIARY

## *Le voyageur enthousiaste observe ...*

*At the Four-Corners Monument: Arizona/Utah/Colorado/  
New Mexico – The Ides of October 1994*

### *A Five-Day Spell of Holiday*

Dear Reader,

Carried over the Atlantic by a medical endeavour to be commented upon at a later point of time, circumstances allowed for a stint of tourism in the South-West.

The meteor crater, Monument Valley, Mesa verde (in snow!) – childhood dreams came true. Chaco Cañon, Cañon de Chelly, Casagrande, the giant saguaro cacti, Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, surrounded by the four holy mountains of the Navajos. Wonders of mother nature and her children, creating awe in the mind of the beholder.

$10^3$  years ago the Pueblo Indians were around,  $5 \times 10^4$  years ago *Homo neanderthalensis* saw the meteor fall,  $2 \times 10^8$  years ago the giant araucarias were buried by tectonic forces and became transformed into marble, deceiving the eyes of today's spectator.

How big a lens do we dermatologists look through, observing the world around us? Or, by the same token, how narrow did the focus become that includes only the pits and pimples of our own surface! *Specialization* limited our playground to within a perimeter of desmosomes and tight junctions, to intercellular adhesion molecules, and apoptosis, cornoid lamellae and collagen link-ups in the basal membrane zone. Birbeck, Langerhans and Langhans; Uitto, Diaz, Nishikawa; Merkel, Stingl, Stanley; 'FITS and CATS

and WOLVES', these are our latter-day heroes. Justifiedly so! But let us not forget about the pits and pimples of our planet: craters, crevices and cañons, cliffs and mesas, pueblos and kiwas, witnesses of history, testimony of having been *cruelly exposed to the environment* as much as the skin [1]. The skin or the environment, surfaces of a micro- and a macrocosmos, results of interactions anyway, they tell the stories of the past.

*Touch* is the secret, staying in touch with the patient, the fellow researcher, the world, physically and metaphorically. Jeffrey Bernhard [2] reiterated that referring to Ashley Montagu. So, once in a while, let us pocket the beautiful lens adorned with the Big Apple, Steve Katz' most thoughtful gift, and look over the fence, touching with eye and finger *surfaces*, substrate and gazebo of our dermatologic obsession, and penetrate it with our understanding.

1 Kligman A: In Montagna W, Lobitz WC (eds): The Epidermis. New York, Academic Press, 1964, pp 390.

2 Bernhard J: Book review. Fitzpatrick's J Clin Dermatol 1994;1:69.

*à bientôt,*

*K.H., Vienna*