

# DESERT

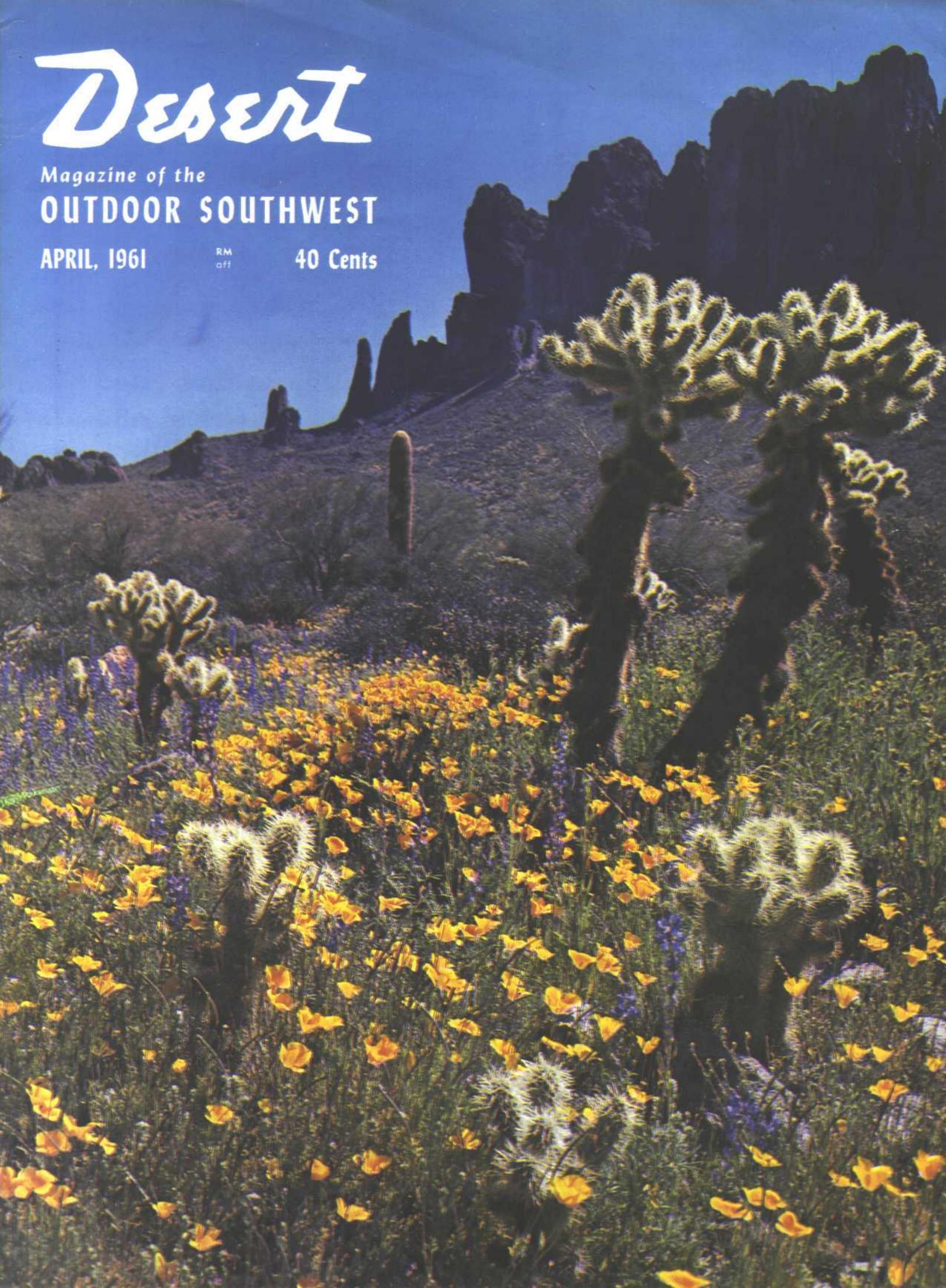
Magazine of the

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# LETTERS

... FROM OUR READERS ...

## The Place for Hunting . . .

*To the Editor:* During the summer, hunting is at a virtual standstill in the Western states, where most of the protected remnants of primeval lands are located. It is during this season that most hikers, students of nature, fishermen and those seeking peace of mind trek to our forest wildlands. Why shouldn't our more sturdy hunters have the right to pursue their chosen recreation in the wilderness areas under the

protection of the Forest Service, when few others are using this land, rather than at some fancy dude hunting club?

We outdoorsmen have a much graver problem confronting us: the possibility of hunting infiltrating our National Parks and Monuments. This threat is gaining momentum. Our National Parks and Monuments are the only areas where we folks who are not hunters may take to the trail with assurance that we will not hear the crack

of a rifle. Therefore, I submit that we allow hunting to remain in the National Forest wilds; but let us never cease our vigilance against such activities in Park Service areas.

LARRY D. ALFORD  
Long Beach, Calif.

## Good Time Maps . . .

*To the Editor:* When my husband asked me to send \$3 to you for back issues of *Desert Magazine*, I thought that anyone who would pay for old magazines was out of his mind.

But, I did as he asked, and when the magazines arrived he pored over them, marking maps to interesting places we wanted to visit.

Our first target was the Palo Verde Pass area. By following your maps, we pulled our 15-foot trailer to the exact spot designated in the story. We enjoyed five wonderful days here. The weather was beautiful.

Now I'm the one who keeps track of our old *Desert Magazines*.

LORRAINE LINDEMAN  
Long Beach, Calif.

## Poison Bait . . .

*To the Editor:* The Tom Hubbard family of the Whittier Rock Club reports that their dog died after eating poison bait on Opal Mountain, near Barstow. The poison apparently was intended for coyotes. There were no signs to warn of its presence.

JEANETTE CASKEY  
Paramount, Calif.

## Rich Experiences . . .

*To the Editor:* I am pretty much of a Desert Rat. I grew up with the sands of the desert in my hair; camped many days in lonely places; drank from far-spaced waterholes, some of which were good, most of which were full of alkali. I have followed lonely trails into deep twisting canyons; encountered storms and winds that would almost tear the flesh from my face. I have passed through deep snows and desolating heat—yet in spite of these desert hardships, I look back upon those years as years of rich experience.

Therefore, three months ago when I read a *Desert Magazine* for the first time, is it any wonder that I felt I had "discovered" a truly great magazine for Southwest people? I trust you will continue with the wonderful work you are doing.

LORENZO HEAPS  
Teasdale, Utah

## Wanted: More Test-Drives . . .

*To the Editor:* Since for the past year I have owned a 1951 Land-Rover, I was quite pleased to see your review of the Land-Rover station wagon in the February *Des-*

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ert. I also appreciated the earlier article on the Tote-Gote and Pak-Jak.

I, too, think that there is no reason why a four-wheel-drive vehicle should not be reasonably comfortable and speedy on the

highway, and that the Land-Rover station wagon is probably the best current solution.

One of the prime reasons I see for specialized editorial attention to four-wheel-drive is the proliferation of vehicles now so equipped. Besides the many pickups now available with four-wheel drive, among the compacts are the one-cylinder Kramer from Germany, the three cylinder DKW Bronco, the Austin Gypsy, the unconventional Mercedes Benz Uni-mog, and the new 100-inch wheelbase International Harvester with removable hardtop. Not yet publicly available are a six cylinder Japanese vehicle reputed to be better than our jeep, and the smaller-than-a-jeep military Mighty Mite.

I am currently investigating the possibilities of the Volkswagen, which I have heard is capable of taking Nevada terrain.

I hope that your Land-Rover article brings sufficient response that you will consider more test-drives and possibly even a monthly column devoted to four-wheel-drive.

JAMES C. MARTIN  
Carson City, Nevada

umns. Our advertising columns are open to all automotive manufacturers who care to direct to themselves the lion's share of whatever business we bring to the industry in general in the months and years ahead.—Ed.)

### The Ambush that Failed . . .

To the Editor: Your account of "America's Last Indian War" in the March issue deserves an additional note. Years ago while working in the southern Utah area, some of the older Bluff residents told me of their experiences during the rebellion led by the Ute Indian, Posey. Mrs. Maggie Nielsen recounted how her husband and the sheriff headed from Bluff to Blanding to get a posse. They went by automobile ("the first Ford in this part of the country"), and as they headed up Cow Canyon, Posey's nephew stepped out on the side of the road.

The sheriff was inclined to stop to pick up the boy, but Mr. Nielsen stepped on the gas, insisting that this was an ambush.

Later, after the battle, Mr. Nielsen was proven right. There were several guns pointing at the car, and if the men had stepped out they would have been shot down.

Westerns have depicted ambushes of horsemen, coaches and people afoot, but the attempt to waylay a car in really rough country is rather unique. The Sheriff and Mr. Nielsen made it to Blanding where they organized the posse that eventually cornered the Indians.

The trading post in the Montezuma Creek area (now called the Aneth Oil Fields) used to have two counters. The top plank was for serving the customers; the counter below held pairs of six-shooters chained at intervals along its length. Thus the trader was prepared to defend himself, if need be, against Posey and his gang.

Last December I revisited this area, seeing what remained of the trees I had planted at the clinic and school I once had here, thinking of the hogans I had lived in. I was rather amazed at the changes the oil boom has brought. The town now has a public school, trailer court, two bars and a supermarket. This last, unfortunately, is built on a site that is rich in prehistoric artifacts. But, the wonderful peace and quiet of the desert was not gone.

FR. EUGENE BOTELHO  
San Juan Mission  
Farmington, New Mexico

### Wildflower Display . . .

To the Editor: We are busy at work in China Lake, Calif., on plans for our 17th Annual Wildflower Show. This year's show will be held April 22-23, and its theme is: "Behold! The Desert."

Even in poor wildflower years, we have managed to put on outstanding displays, since we scout for flowers in many of the out-of-the-way places.

Again we invite all of our friends to attend this show.

ELIZABETH HISE  
China Lake, Calif.

(For a detailed report on California desert wildflowers, see page 28.—Ed.)

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Kar Kamp Mfg., 8925 E. Garvey Ave.  
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### The Automobile Business . . .

To the Editor: I regret to see you go into the automobile business ("Desert Magazine Test Drives The Land-Rover," February issue), especially selling a foreign car when we have several good four-wheel-drive vehicles manufactured in the United States. Three of the above mentioned manufacturers are laying off 90,000 employees this week.

CARL W. JOHNSON  
Fort Bragg, Calif.

(Desert Magazine takes pride in its long record of popularizing four-wheel-drive exploration of the desert. By-product of this effort has been the stimulation of four-wheel-drive vehicle sales. Backcountry travel is a cornerstone of our editorial policy, and the report to our readers on the virtues and shortcomings of the Land-Rover—a newcomer to the Southwestern scene—was a natural outgrowth of this coverage. We plan to do more test-drive articles whenever we feel we can be of service to our readership; and of course backcountry travel stories and maps will always be in our editorial col-

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# Desert

--magazine of the Outdoor Southwest--

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EVONNE RIDDELL  
circulation manager

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Photographer Darwin VanCampen of Phoenix titles this spring bouquet, "Cholla Twins," in deference to the haughty pair of cacti standing above their lesser tribesmen, and the poppies and lupines.

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# **THE WRONG TURN**

*Two young men and an invincible Model T Ford  
perform a miracle of sorts in Death Valley*

**By ARTHUR R. BENTON**

**I**N 1925 WALLY and I decided to make a motor trip to Death Valley to see for ourselves if the place was as forbidding as its reputation led the world to believe.

At this time I had a garage in Beverly Hills, and Wally was helping his dad run the gasoline station in front of my place. We converted my 1915 Ford Model T touring car into a "Death Valley Special." First we put new tires on the Ford, then we cut the body in two just behind the back seat, built a flatbed on the frame with high sides and a big tailgate that could be let down for use as a table. Next we erected a framework of "U" ribs over the bed, covered them with canvas—and we had a genuine motorized covered wagon.

Overhauling the engine and transmission was also on the agenda. We installed a four-to-one gear ratio in the rear-end to increase power for pulling through sandy roads.

Final step was to install on the floorboard up front a large oval gasoline tank taken from an old Stutz Bearcat. On the running-boards we strapped five-gallon cans full of cylinder oil and water. We took along plenty of spare parts and tools, and plenty of food and blankets. A coal oil lantern completed our outfit.

And then we were off in the pre-dawn darkness! From Beverly Hills we drove to Azusa, San Bernardino, over the Cajon Pass to the Mojave Desert.

After we left Barstow, making a straight bee-line for Cave Springs, our road deteriorated into a couple of wheel tracks through the sand and sagebrush. At dusk we had the feeling that we were passing landmarks that we had seen earlier in the afternoon, so we stopped the Lizzie and camped for the night. Next morning we met a crew from the Auto Club working on road signs.

"I don't think much of your signs," I told one of the fellows. "Seems to me they are leading us in circles."

"They sure are," answered the Auto Club man. "Someone with a warped sense of humor turned the signs around so you would be doing just that. We're working like mad to get them straightened around before an innocent party follows them into nowhere and dies of thirst."

Maybe there was something to this business of Death Valley's reputation.

The Auto Club people directed us to Cave Springs, and a couple living there told us how to get through Death Valley and on to Scotty's Castle—which had somehow evolved as our destination.

"Scotty's place is in Grapevine Canyon way up on the far end of Death Valley," the Cave Springs man told us. He suggested that we get exact directions to Grapevine Canyon from a fellow named Charley Brown who was living at Shoshone, a few miles up the road. (Today, Mr. Brown is a state senator.)

But we had maps—and the impatience of youth—so we by-passed Shoshone and took a sharp turn to the west. By entering Death Valley by way of Bradbury Well, Ashford's Mill and then on to Bennett's Well, we would be able to travel the gorge from one end to the other which was, after all, our intent.

The day warmed up as we got closer to Bennett's Well, and the Model T began to boil. We were now crawling through the sand in low gear, and the old Ford was taking water like an elephant at a circus.

We passed Bennett's Well without stopping, and the brilliant May sun was beginning to bear down on us. The only people we had seen in Death Valley so far were two prospectors far off in the distance.

There was not a soul in sight at Furnace Creek—just an

Indian school on one side of the road and a house on the other. We did not stop.

The farther northward we traveled, the hotter the day became. Although we could see the desert shrubs creep by, we had the feeling that we were standing still. The mountain scenery towering over us remained practically constant—ageless and somber walls, aloof to the little drama we were playing on the Valley floor.

We came to two road branches — the east-trending ruts leading to Beatty, as indicated on our map. So far there was no doubt in our minds as to exactly where we were. But, a few miles farther on we came to two joints of stovepipe stuck in a hole in the sand. Stovepipe Wells? Couldn't be. According to the map, Stovepipe Wells would be on the flank of the Panamints on the far side of the glimmering alkali sink lying between our road and the western hills.

There is no doubt that the mounting heat contributed to our confusion. We stopped the Ford and sat staring at the "well" in a daze. There was no water in our stovepipe. There were no shade trees. No nothing. Without a word we continued northward.

And then we came to the fateful fork in the road. The



A 36-YEAR-OLD PHOTO OF WALLY AND THE "DEATH VALLEY SPECIAL"

right branch led up a bajada into the mouth of a canyon. This must be Grapevine Canyon, the site Scotty had picked for his fabulous castle, we thought.

We entered the mouth of the canyon just as the sun sank behind the Panamints. Thank heavens! Now things would cool off.

But soon we had more than the heat to think about (the heat stayed with us). We couldn't understand how anyone ever got up this road, let alone haul in materials with which to build a castle. Furthermore, the castle was not yet completed (work progressed from 1922 to 1929), but there was no evidence that our road had seen or was seeing much traffic these days.

We kept getting stuck in the sand. We'd back off the sandy stretch as best we could, cover it with brush, and take another whack at the road. The Model T had a magneto built into the flywheel which provided the juice for the headlights as well as the spark. Because we traveled the entire canyon at a snail's pace, we had practically no lights. But, even without lights we knew something was happening to our canyon. The sound of our chugging motor reverberated off the walls of the narrow defile (in some places, 20 feet wide and several hundred feet tall).

Every few feet there was another twist in the road, or an



THE AUTHOR, AT THE TIME OF HIS TRIP

Ruins of the Leadfield Hotel. Instead of the 40-room hotel the mine promoters said they were going to build at the mining camp, they built this one which accommodated four guests at a time.

upward pitch. The poor car was boiling its head off, and we began to wonder if our surplus water supply was going to last.

Water! What would happen to us in this awesome gash in the side of a sheer mountain if a flash-flood came tearing down the canyon?

The silent thought of this catastrophe spurred us on. On some stretches we actually had to make our road.

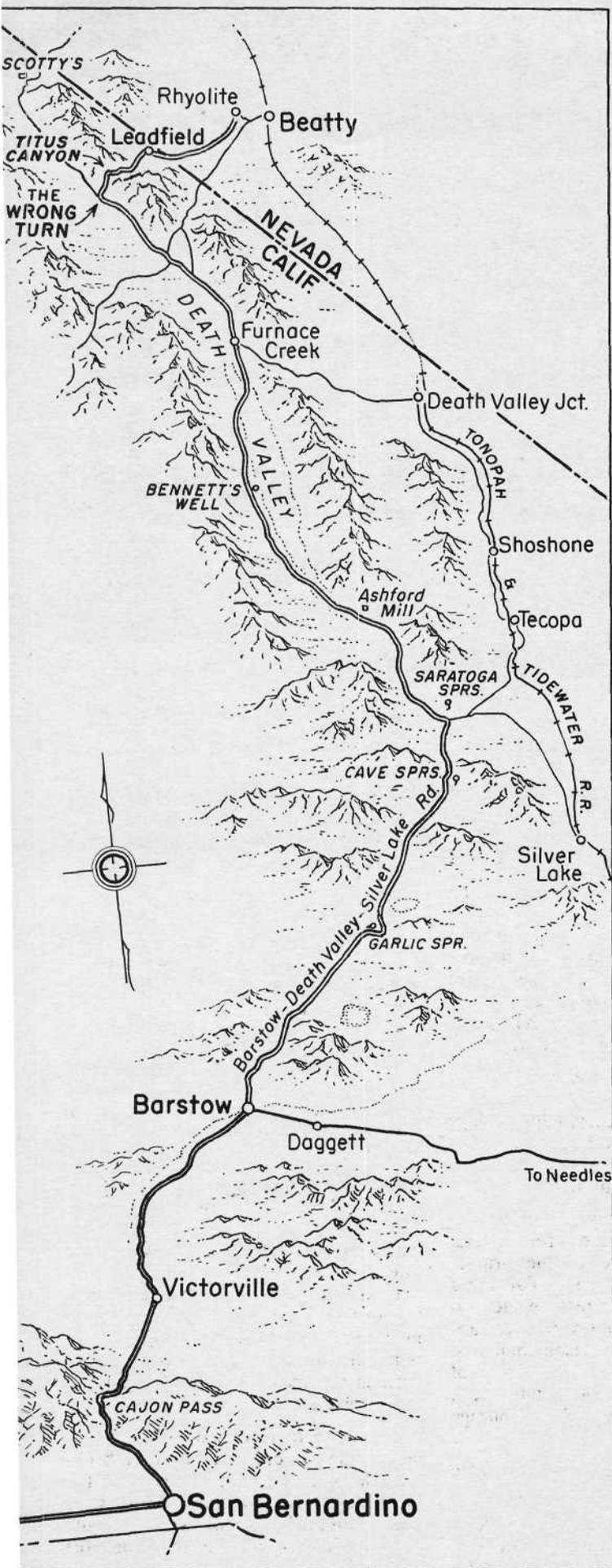
The way became steeper, and a new difficulty assaulted us: the gasoline would not flow from the rear gas tank to the carburetor. We switched to the auxiliary Stutz Bearcat tank in the front-end of the car. (In Model T days, drivers often had to back-up steep grades in order to assure proper gas-flow.)

Finally—after eight miles of canyon and four hours of

## True or False

Desert Rats like to brag about how much they savvy the Great Southwest. Take this test to see whether or not you should do some bragging next time the opportunity arises. The law of averages gives you 10 correct answers, so 14 is a passing grade; 15-17 is good; 18-20, excellent. Answers are on page 34.

1. The first colony of Mormon emigrants reached Utah in 1820. True... False...
2. Ruth, Nevada, is known for its great borax mines. True... False...
3. Jojoba is a wild pig found on the desert. True... False...
4. Clyde Forsythe is best known in the Southwest for his work as a mining engineer. True... False...
5. Tinajas is a Spanish word meaning "where the tin ore is found." True... False...
6. The Butterfield transcontinental stage line crossed the Colorado River at Hite's Ferry, Utah. True... False...
7. Salton Sea is the largest inland body of water west of the Rocky Mountains. True... False...
8. The famed Chimayo Blankets of New Mexico are woven by descendants of the Spaniards. True... False...
9. Fangs of a rattlesnake are in its lower jaw. True... False...
10. The Joshua Tree belongs to the Lily family. True... False...
11. The famous Bird Cage Theater was an important part of early-day Virginia City, Nevada. True... False...
12. The two buttes known as "The Mittens" are located in Monument Valley. True... False...
13. The Havasupai Indians of northern Arizona are closely related to the Hualpais. True... False...
14. In order to gather ripe fruit, Papago Indians climb saguaro cacti. True... False...
15. The "Boron Enterprise" is a California newspaper. True... False...
16. Going through Daylight Pass, the traveler enters Death Valley from the east. True... False...
17. The Great White Throne is in Zion National Park. True... False...
18. "Five Spot" is the common name of a desert flower. True... False...
19. A metate was used by the Indians for killing game. True... False...
20. About 95 percent of the dates grown commercially in the United States come from the Dateland, Arizona, area. True... False...



back-breaking effort—we entered a small town! Nothing like we expected to see at Scotty's.

The first place with lights burning we came to seemed to be a restaurant or a company boarding house. We were so hungry and tired that we didn't bother to read whatever signs might have been tacked to the building to identify it. We asked for something to eat and were served.

There were a few men in the place, and their questions started to come with the first course. Our dinner companions were downright hostile. They were not about to believe that we had come up the canyon.

"Titus Canyon is one-way—down," snorted one of the men.

"Titus!" I exclaimed. "I thought it was Grapevine."

The men exchanged knowing glances.

"What's the name of this place?" asked Wally. "We're trying to get to Scotty's Castle."

"Leadfield," one of them answered. "How come," he added, "you come up a canyon that is impossible to drive up in the first place?"

"That road," added a second Leadfield citizen, "is for down traffic only."

"Yeah," said a third, "Why come up Titus Canyon if you are going to Scotty's place?"

And so it went—right up to dessert.

There was no time for after-dinner conviviality.

"If you guys want to get out of Leadfield," said one of the men, "you'd better keep moving. They're going to dynamite the road to Beatty in the morning."

Good idea, Wally and I decided. We had never run into such an unfriendly group of men in our lives, and we thought that Leadfield would be a pretty good town to leave behind. Besides, if we stayed over, and if the dynamite crew blasted the eastern exit in the morning, there would be only one way out—back down Titus Canyon to Death Valley. We had had our fill of Titus!

So off we went—and the road to Beatty was not much better than the Titus Canyon boulevard. What this new stretch of trail lacked in sand, it made up in steepness. The hairpin turns and the sheer drop-offs were nightmares. Topping some rises, we could not see whether the road beyond plunged right, left, or straight off into space.

Luckily, after we hit the downhill stretch a few miles out of Leadfield, the Ford began running cooler. If I remember correctly, we didn't bother to stop at Beatty. Death Valley was behind us, and we headed home.

As the months and years went by, we could better understand our Leadfield reception. The camp was the last of the great Western mining swindles. Promoted by C. C. Julian, already in hot water over shady oil deals, Leadfield had everything except good ore. Julian took care of this detail by bringing-in high-grade ore from Tonopah by the wagon load. These rich chunks of lead were sprinkled over the worthless Leadfield mine dumps just before a large group of potential investors was due in town, lured to the new bonanza, no doubt, by the brochures Julian printed which showed steamboats on the Amargosa River, their holds overflowing with Leadfield lead ore.

The Leadfield post office opened on August 25, 1926, with mail for 200 people. Half-a-year later there was mail for only one person, and the post office closed.

All of this is history, and for a very brief moment, Wally and I and our Model T covered wagon were part of it. ///



# ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

## Rugged Roads; Whimsical Whales

Based on the author's personal adventures in Baja California. This chapter is taken from Erle Stanley Gardner's recently published book.

### HUNTING THE DESERT WHALE

© 1960 by Erle Stanley Gardner

**D**OWN AT SCAMMON'S Lagoon where we were headed, there is a normal annual rainfall of about one-half of an inch. Now there had been seven inches in the last two months—with more to come, only we didn't know it.

So we crept up the sandy road carpeted with wild flowers until we came to the granite country.

It is impossible to describe this granite country in words and it is exceedingly difficult to get photographs which tell the story of this vast expanse of weatherworn granite, lying silent in the sunlight; a country of mountains, deep canyons, native palm trees, elephant and cirio trees.

Both the elephant and the cirio trees are found in Baja California. I think there is no other place in the world where the cirio tree grows. The elephant tree has crept north into the extreme southern desert section of California, but these trees are indigenous to Baja California.

Up in the granite country winds laden with drifting sand from the lower levels have carved the huge granite boulders near the summit into grotesque shapes; sometimes wearing wind caves in them, sometimes making holes and arches completely through the rocks. Lower down in the wind-protected areas the granite has weathered out until there are times when it seems

some giant hand has baked a loaf of granite bread, weighing several thousand tons, and then has sliced those loaves into five or six pieces.

This country is fertile, despite the granite ledges. Ocotillo, cirio, elephant trees, the bisnaga cactus, and much of the smaller desert foliage grow in profusion. The granite casts weird shadows and the dazzling sunlight is so intense in the dry air that these shadows seem jet black by contrast.

This is the home of the famous Baja California big-horn sheep, of deer, of rattlesnakes, and occasionally springs of poison water. It is a country which lies quiet in the sunlight, yet there is a strange power about it.

After the road leaves the flower-covered desert it winds for several miles along the edge of the granite country, then comes to a flat mesa where recently a venturesome individual started making adobe bricks, apparently for no other reason than that there was a deep well with plenty of sweet water and lots of suitable soil, the bricks were to be sold at Gonzaga Bay.

There are mines up here, and there is a lot of gold in the country.

Near the deep well one can usually find a hard-bitten miner making his headquarters and mining gold from

some secret source, extracting the gold from the rich ore by the most primitive of methods and so making enough to live on but not much more.

We make it a point to carry a few luxuries for gifts to people such as these: cigarettes, perhaps a few oranges or tomatoes, bread and matches. These are luxuries beyond price in an isolated country.

These men are deserving. They are glad to receive such gifts as tourists can bring, but they are not moochers. Nor are they beggars. They are men who are eager to find some way of earning a living.

The Mexican who has a little corner of ground can grow corn, keep goats, and manage an existence. The Mexican who doesn't have these things must have a job if he is going to support himself, and in parts of the country jobs are very hard to find. So the ingenious laborer who wants to work but can find no employment, devises various schemes by which he can eke out an existence.

Here and there one will find volunteer road laborers; men who walk out into the places where the road is the most dangerous, make a camp of sorts and voluntarily go to work on the road, trying to keep it in some sort of repair.

Grateful drivers will from time to time leave them cigarettes, perhaps a loaf of bread or a handful of frijoles.

These laborers gratefully accept whatever is offered and continue their work on the road, living in a primitive manner which is almost unbelievable.

We came on one of these camps where the shelter had been formed simply by taking the hood of a wrecked truck, propping it up on end with stones, to give shelter on the windward side, and then putting cloth on the other side, weighing the cloth down with stones and so furnishing a partial shelter in which two men could find a little protection from the weather.

This camp was as neat as a pin; well kept, and the men were alert and intelligent. They were twelve miles from the nearest place where supplies could be obtained. After receiving a few pesos from grateful truck drivers, they would cheerfully walk the twelve miles to exchange their pesos for a few of the bare necessities of life, then walk back; covering the twenty-four miles in a day, carrying their meager supplies in a small sack. The next day at daylight they would be out working on the road.

And yet, somehow, there is a feeling in the United States that the Mexican is lazy.

Here were men who had created their own jobs; who worked hard; who lived under the most primitive conditions; who never had quite enough to eat; yet who kept themselves clean and presentable; who maintained a spotless camp and who were eager to be of service.

Working only with somewhat battered shovels and a pick, without even the aid of a wheelbarrow, these men were limited as to over-all efficiency. Yet they did the best they could and the truck drivers, themselves working on a slender margin and beset by financial troubles, nevertheless recognizing the spirit of the volunteer road workers gave them a peso now and then or bits of food which the truck drivers themselves could ill spare.

It is that spirit of friendly co-operation, of courteous recognition of a person's intentions, the desire to live and let live, which is so characteristic of Baja California.

Leaving the flat mesa we descended once more into the granite canyons and made camp that night at the site of an old mine.

The next morning we were on our way past Lake Chapala, which was

now filled with water, and turned south on the road to Punta Prieta.

This is some of the most photogenic country in the world. There are miles and miles of mountains and valleys. Drifting cloud shadows soften the scenery. There are veritable forests of agave, yucca, cirio, elephant trees, the huge cardon, the various varieties of cholla cacti and other desert plants.

And over it all is the cloak of complete silence.

Here one has turned his back on the clock. There is unhurried peace and silence. During the night there will be the hoot of an occasional owl, the weird cacophony of the coyotes; but during the daytime one encounters only brooding silence.

It is impossible to account for the charm of this country or its fascination, but those who are familiar with the land of Baja California are either afraid of it or they love it, and if they love it they are brought back by an irresistible fascination time after time.

Charles J. McClaughry, the manager of the salt works at Guerrero Negro is a remarkable executive. He has managed to instill in all of his employees an innate dignified courtesy which permeates the place and gives one the impression that here is no soulless corporation exploiting the native laborer on the one hand and the resources of the country on the other, but a dignified, cohesive body of men all co-operating to the utmost to attain several objectives: profits for the owners, high wages for the men who work there, better working conditions, and, above all, an awareness of human dignity and the rights of the individual.

Truck drivers wave to each other in passing, working men gravely lift their hats to each other as well as to visitors and smile a greeting. Throughout the place is an air of friendliness, co-operation and efficiency.

I know nothing whatever about gathering salt or the complicated mechanics of maintaining water at the exact temperatures where the different chemicals are precipitated, but I do know something about human nature in the aggregate, and I have been in enough factories, company communities and other gatherings to get the feeling of tension where it exists.

I have never encountered any place where there was more of a feeling of cohesive co-operation and an underlying appreciation of human dignity and human rights than there is at this salt works, and I feel certain from what I have learned that the main-spring of all this—the inspiration—

is Charles J. McClaughry. And his wife has been indispensable in creating a social life in the place.

I suppose this sounds like fulsome praise, but anyone who has been privileged to see the way life goes on at the salt works, and who has been in enough company-owned mining towns or lumbering villages, will know how easy it is for these little communities to become hotbeds of petty jealousies on the one hand and sullen routine on the other.

Of course, McClaughry must have had good basic raw material to work with. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but all human beings have a desire to bring out the best that is in them and McClaughry has implanted this as an ambition in his various employees there at the salt works.

To me it was an inspiration to see a one-company settlement maintained in this manner.

We were given permission to use the company road across the salt pans and down to the gauging station on Scammon's Lagoon. This is the only road by which automobiles can reach Scammon's Lagoon. The road traverses some eighteen miles of sand and salt.

We found the salt pans flooded. This flooding was not the result of design but was due to the fact that enough rainfall to cover an average for some fourteen years had fallen in the last two months, raising problems in connection with production which were becoming increasingly serious. When a salt pan has been flooded for just the right period it suddenly starts dissolving and turns to mush with startling rapidity. At such times an automobile striking a soft spot could sink out of sight if immediate help were not available.

We found that the salt pans we must cross had been flooded for some time and there was a question whether we would be trapped if we made camp where we had to cross them many times.

When we first crossed these salt beds the water was only a few inches deep but it had been fresh water which had been standing there for some time. Under the circumstances, there was the natural tendency to hurry across so we could get safely to the other side—and hurrying is just the wrong thing to do.

Not only is it a mistake to hurry across the submerged salt pans, but it is a mistake to try to hurry anywhere in Baja California. A speed of six or seven miles an hour across

the salt pans will get you where you want to go; but it is a great temptation to increase speed to twelve or fifteen miles an hour. Then the churned-up salt brine is splashed over the undercarriage of the car, over the springs and spring shackles and some of the drops may get caught by the fan and thrown against the distributor.

Heaven help you if this salt brine ever gets in the ignition!

After you are across the salt pan the water dries and leaves an encrustation of salt all over the car. Later on, whenever you encounter moist air, particularly on a dewy night, the salt will attract the moisture and if the salt has got to the ignition system, the resulting condensation will result in conditions under which your car isn't going to start.

I made the mistake of going a little too fast, not across the salt pan itself but through one of the puddles in the road which, as it turned out, was encrusted with salt. Water got into the ignition of the jeep, and since it was only a hundred yards from camp I walked away and left the car. I returned after a couple of hours when the water had dried off and it started without trouble.

After that, however, whenever there would be a heavy dew at night, my jeep simply wouldn't start in the morning until it had been dried out by hand and then towed along behind another car.

As it happened, we crossed the salt pans in good shape, fought our way through the sand hills beyond and came to the gauging station at the end of the road where we were going to make our first camp.

Ahead of us lay the waters of Scammon's Lagoon and we made camp right on the brink of the lagoon.

We only intended to stay at this camp long enough to get the boats launched so we hurriedly unloaded the cars, piling everything helter-skelter on the sandy hills above the high water line, and then went out in search of wood.

Firewood in this place was at a premium.

I didn't give the matter any thought at the time. All I knew was that we needed firewood and we had to go some distance to gather it. It never occurred to me in my selfishness to wonder what a turtle fisherman named Justo and his companion at the turtle camp did for their firewood.

Afterwards I found out that getting enough firewood to cook a meal involved much walking and much searching.

A few shrubs grew to a height of six or eight inches above the soil and occasionally some of these died and the wood became dry enough to burn. Justo and his companion would start out in the afternoon with a length of light rope about two and a half feet long. They would be gone for perhaps an hour or an hour and a half and come back with a little bundle of sticks tied up in the rope. This was their firewood.

The fire was hardly bigger than the light of a candle, carefully fed and nursed with the precious wood so that every bit of flame did its share in cooking a meal.

Murl Emery knew of a place up on a bluff some six or seven miles away where there were larger bushes growing and we took the empty pickups and went up to this place, returning with a couple of pick-up loads of firewood.

We cooked our supper, spread out our sleeping bags, inflated the air mattresses and built a roaring camp fire.

I have often wondered how Justo and his companion must have felt as they sat by their little candle-sized flame and looked across a couple of hundred yards to where the "rich tourists" had a roaring camp fire some six or eight feet in diameter, sitting around it toasting their bodies and wasting the precious natural resources of the country.

Eventually we let the fire die down but still left plenty of wood for a big breakfast fire in the morning.

It was cloudy but we felt certain it *couldn't* rain. The country was soaked! It had more than enough rain to last for years. According to the law of averages the rains must be over. This was only a high fog.

We drifted blissfully off to sleep.

I wakened about midnight with the first gentle drops falling on my face. I sighed, thought some of getting up to distribute my bed canvas more evenly, but drowsily pulled it up over my head and trusted to luck that it was all right. I went back to sleep and was awakened by pelting rain, pouring down, hitting my bed canvas and running off into the sand.

I was warm, the canvas was keeping me dry. I had nothing to worry about, so I once more didn't take the trouble to get up and see that the folds of the upper canvas were spread out over the lower canvas so that water wouldn't run into my sleeping bag. After all, I reasoned drowsily, this couldn't be any more than a shower.

Rain came down in curtains, in sheets, in torrents. I later found out that the lower canvas had spread out so it was catching the drop from the upper canvas and my sleeping bag was lying in a pool of water. By that time it was too late to do anything about it and I felt certain that the next day would be sunny and warm and I could spread things out and let them dry; so once more I drifted off to slumber.

Daylight came; a cold, wet, dismal dawn with rain still pelting down. I stayed in my sleeping bag as long as possible and then finally faced the bitter chore of crawling out of a warm sleeping bag and dressing in the midst of a cold rain.

I squirmed my way out of the sleeping bag and rubbed my eyes in surprise. During the night Sam Hicks and Pat Emery had dressed and put up the big tent in the dark. They had put in a stove, built a fire in the stove, and not only was the tent warm and dry but the water which fell on the top of the tent was turning to steam and evaporating, simply from the warmth of the fire in the stove.

Quite naturally I gathered my clothes and made a run for the tent, only to find that the others had done likewise and soon we were all dressed, waiting for it to let up.

The rain didn't let up. Everything that had been out in the open was soaking wet. So we had the job of launching the boats in the rain, trying to protect our films and cameras as best we could with what waterproofing we had, and fighting our way out across Scammon's Lagoon to the island where we intended to make our camp—all in a drenching downpour.

The reason I mention all this is that the stove didn't use nearly as much wood as the open camp fire. By the time we had had breakfast, had launched the boats, had squeezed as much water as we could out of the things from which water could be squeezed, and had loaded the boats to make the first trip to the island, we still had a lot of firewood left in the pile.

Personally I didn't give this firewood very much thought. I felt that it would come in handy for Justo and his companion, camped over there on the point, but right at the moment my main concern was to try and get to where we could establish a more permanent camp, put up all of our tents and try if possible to get dried out before nightfall.

Rain was the one thing we hadn't

*Text continues on page 15*



In the forest of cirio trees. These strange plants add a freakish touch to the Baja landscape.

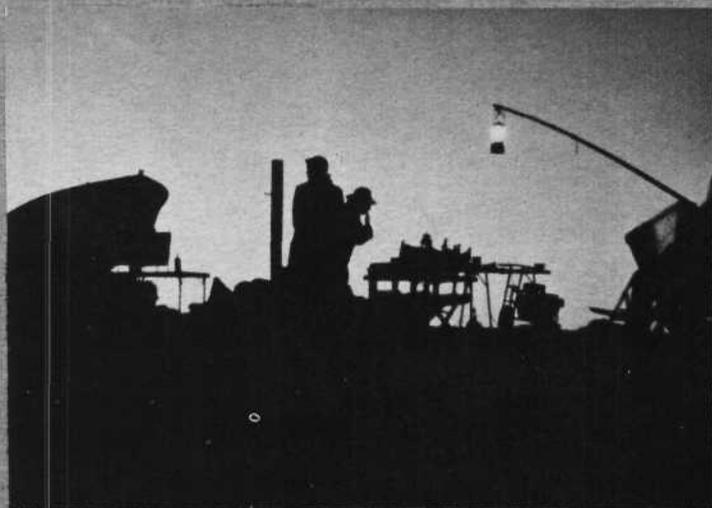
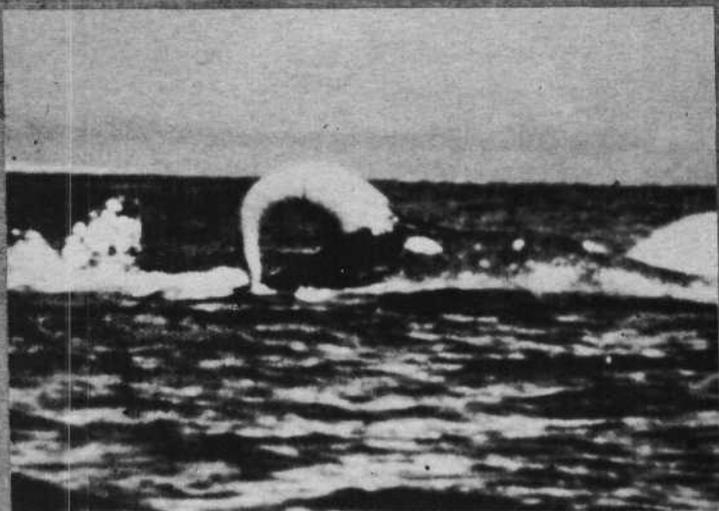
Baja California miner sits in his humble camp. The peninsula natives are cheerful, industrious.

Murl can repair almost anything with almost nothing. Here he is rigging a substitute hitch.

This is the rugged granite country in mid-peninsula. The roads here are tire-chewing trails.

Volunteer road worker's shelter was made from hood off an old truck and small piece of canvas.

A mine camp. Members of the Gardner expedition share cigarettes with the mine operator.



"Emotionally aroused" whale hurls its massive body completely out of the Lagoon waters.

The boats put in to shore. Every landing on the rim of the Lagoon offers virgin beach to explore.

Murl and Charles McClaughry, right, manager of Guerrero Negro salt works, discuss the road.

A newborn whale—17 feet long—circles one of the boats thinking the craft is his lost mother.

The fading light of dusk silhouettes the whale hunters' camp on an island in the Lagoon.

Pat Emery throws back an undersized fish. Baja California's waters are a fisherman's paradise.

## ERLE STANLEY GARDNER / RUGGED ROADS; WHIMSICAL WHALES

Text continued from page 12

counted on. We had, of course, brought tents just in case, but we had expected to use these mainly as shelters against the winds and the heavy dews which are customary at night along the ocean.

Our first boat loads took only the absolute necessities for our new camp: a tent, a stove, some provisions, and some of the photographic material. The rest we covered with canvas and left for a second load.

Therefore it happened that my first experience with the whales in Scammon's Lagoon was during a period of rain, of wind-driven moisture and a cold wind from the ocean.

The island where we were going to make our camp was some fifteen or twenty miles down the lagoon and, even heavily loaded, our boats could make a good twenty miles per hour.

Right at the moment we weren't interested in whales. We were interested in dry clothes and a warm fire.

I remember looking at the pile of wood we had built up and wondering vaguely if there would be wood we could burn on the island, but it would have been out of the question to have tried to add wood to our burden on the loaded boats, so we put just as much of a load in the boats as we felt they would carry for that first trip and shoved off.

The point is that the abandoned wood pile stayed there for some ten days or two weeks. The frugal Justo and his companion came over and cleaned up everything we had left behind which they felt certain we had intended to throw away; an old canteen which had sprung a leak, the empty tin cans which we had buried and which the coyotes had promptly dug up; everything that we had discarded as of no further use to us which Justo and his companion could use they had picked up and carried away.

But the wood pile? When we came back at the end of ten days that wood pile was intact, waiting for us.

That rain turned out to be the fore-runner of a three and a half day storm. Justo and his companion must have been cold, wet and miserable. They needed firewood badly. They couldn't go out to get it and there was a pile of abandoned firewood of sufficient magnitude to last them for two or three weeks with their frugal way of living and their conservation of firewood; but the thought of touching it never entered their minds. We hadn't

told them they could have it, therefore they reasoned we would probably want it on our return. The fact that we would touch a match to it and burn up a three week's supply of firewood in an hour or two didn't have anything to do with it. This was our wood. We had gathered it. They wouldn't think of touching it.

I mention this in order to show something of the inherent honesty of the Mexicans of Baja California. I have encountered this time and time again. I remember one time that we made a camp and carefully buried all of our empty tin cans. Then we started on and for some reason didn't go far before making another camp. A Mexican passed us going down the road, came to our old camp, found the place where we had buried our empty cans, and then turned around and came all the way back riding his burro to ask if we intended to use those cans again or if we had thrown them away, because if we had thrown them away he wanted them very much to use as cooking utensils.

These people lead simple lives. Their wants are few but such wants as they do have are vital. Firewood and cooking utensils are wealth, yet their honesty is such that they would freeze or starve rather than touch something that belonged to someone else.

The weather lightened a little bit after we got under way. I held one of my cameras under a rainproof poncho, despite the fact that my clothes were wet, and stood in the bow of the boat waiting for the first whale adventure.

It wasn't long before we had it.

A whale unexpectedly came to the surface a short distance in front of our boat, shot out a great cloud of steamy breath and then plunged down to the bottom, thoroughly alarmed by the boats and sending up great disturbances in the water every time his powerful tail propelled him forward.

At the time I didn't know enough about whales to realize that he was getting away as best he could. All I knew was that the water was churning about the boat and I began to wonder vaguely if we could count on these whales being safe.

A few miles farther on we came on several whales drifting along on the surface of the water. They promptly submerged when Murl Emery's boat, which was in the lead, came within a few feet of them. One of the whales,

however, didn't go deep. He remained just under the surface, whirled around past Emery's boat, then, as we could see under the surface of the water, made directly for our boat.

I watched for a moment and didn't like the way he was coming. There was a purposeful something about it, and he was moving at speed. He was making no attempt to submerge but was coming just a few feet under the water and directly for us.

"Sam," I said, "I don't know enough about these whales to depend on Emery's judgment. Let's get the hell out of here!"

We had lots of horsepower in that boat and Sam Hicks shoved the throttle forward and we got out of there, just a few feet ahead of the approaching whale.

At the time I thought the whale was charging but I didn't venture the opinion because I didn't know anything about whales and I was the only one who seemed alarmed.

Later on, after I got home and started reading about whales I knew darn good and well he was charging.

It was that day I began to realize something of what we were up against in photographing whales.

A whale is an enormous mammal. He is dark in color except where there are patches of white on his skin and where barnacles cling to his hide. He comes up out of the blue water, spouts, and goes down. While he is spouting, only a few inches of his huge body are above the water. Sometimes I doubt if he protrudes more than six inches above the surface.

When you try to take his picture there is little contrast between the whale and the water. If one is standing in a boat so that the camera is five or six feet above the waterline there is no way of showing a silhouette of the whale's back that is out of the water.

Moreover, an ordinary focal-length lens will make a whale only a few feet away appear to be quite distant. The long focal-length lens will blur the image on the film because a telephoto lens requires a firm, steady foundation and you can't get a firm, steady foundation in a bouncing small boat.

In fact, as we were to learn later, photographing whales in their native habitat is just about the most difficult photographing assignment one could wish for.

We saw quite a few whales on our

trip to the island, but I signaled Emery that I didn't want to deviate our course an inch in order to take whale pictures. We were racing against the tide because once the tide went down we would have to wade across muddy tide flats in order to transport stuff to and from the boats. We had literally hundreds of pounds of equipment, and the fact that much of our camp equipment was soaking wet didn't simplify the problem. A dry tent which weighs a hundred pounds is quite a problem, but let that tent once get wet and getting it transported and put up becomes an engineering feat.

We reached the island and Sam Hicks and Pat Emery worked like Trojans, rushing stuff ashore, putting up a shelter tent and connecting a stove. Then they dashed off in the boats to pick up the rest of the camp and we started trying to gather firewood.

Once in the middle of the night when we were camped near where there was a huge raft of geese, we heard the sudden whirr of wings and then literally thousands of birds were flying in panic in the darkness overhead. Their flight was so low and close and their wings beating the air so fast that it sounded something like a jet plane taking off from an airport.

Next morning we found a big pile of feathers and evidences that one or more coyotes had enjoyed a sumptuous repast.

I have an idea that these coyotes have learned to move silently in the shallow water until they can pounce upon some sleeping bird.

After this experience we started looking along the shoreline in the salt water grass and found many a pile of feathers.

The coyotes were well fed—so were we.

It soon became apparent that the sound of our powerful motors disturbed the whales and caused them to dive. It *might* have caused them to attack the boats if it weren't for the fact that we were going too fast for the whales to catch up with us, but for the most part the whales simply became frightened.

By this time we had learned enough about whales to know that when a whale submerged and the water became agitated in a series of whirlpools, the whale was getting out of there fast and diving deep all at the same time.

These animals are so powerful that when their huge tails are called on to furnish motive power for a fast dive the water on the surface is churned up into eddies and small whirlpools.

We decided to slow down and try sneaking up on the whales but soon found that didn't work.

So then we decided to go out and anchor the boats, shut off the motors and wait for the whales to come drifting along with the tide.

At the time we didn't realize how risky that could be. We knew that there were certain things which could happen. A whale could get tangled up with the anchor line; or a whale could come to the surface, see us sitting there, decide we were hostile and give us a casual slap with his tail which would put the boat at the bottom and its passengers in the hospital or in a shark's belly.

However, we were still laboring under the delusion that the whales were peaceful so we went out early in the morning and anchored the boats.

The tide changed and soon the whales came drifting along.

The boats were about seventy-five feet apart and sometimes whales would come by one boat, sometimes by another. We felt that colored film would give us a better idea of where the whales began and the water left off, although we knew that for purposes of book publication we would have to limit the pictures to black and white.

So we had cameras with colored film, cameras with black and white film, and movies grinding away on colored film.

I was leaving it up to Sam to take pictures in black and white. I was working a color movie camera with a fairly long focal-length lens.

Over in the other boat Murl and Pat Emery were grinding away with colored movies and Joe Gandara was also taking colored movies. I was the only one who really wanted pictures for publication and I felt that Sam, who is a pretty expert photographer, could be trusted to get good black and white pictures of anything which came along.

Then without previous warning came a moment of terrific excitement. A whale was approaching and unless he changed his course it looked very much as though he were going to pass right between the two boats.

What would he do?

If he came up close to one of the boats, would he ignore it or would he give it a slap with his tail? It was too late to haul up the anchors and start the motors. We had to sit this one out.

It was amusing to see everyone start putting on life preservers as though

someone had given the signal for a boat drill. I know that I was excited and scared, and from the way grown men began to whisper and giggle I gathered the others were sharing at least some of my feelings.

The whale came ploughing majestically on. He passed directly between the boats. I guess he was not over fifteen or twenty feet from us.

I know he was so close that my lens had a problem of parallax with the finder, which I didn't correct, and it wasn't until two-thirds of the whale's length had gone by that I realized what was happening to my pictures. So I elevated the camera in time to get some good pictures of the west end of a whale headed east. Prior to that time my lens was taking some wonderful pictures of the rippling waves thrown up by a huge whale, bigger than a locomotive, ploughing his majestic way through a tranquil sea.

Soon we had another adventure—this time with a "baby" whale, which probably had been newly born. He had been injured in some way and the poor thing was looking for his mother. He thought our boats might be Mother, and he started hanging around our boats, swimming in circles and on one occasion actually going under the boat and coming up underneath it so that the boat slipped off his back.

We got some hurried pictures but the question always arose, where was Mother?

In Mother's eyes this was a poor little destitute offspring in need of attention and protection. To us, he was a seventeen-foot whale still capable of smashing a boat with his tail or upsetting us in the shark-infested waters.

A little of that stuff goes a long way.

We got some photographs which fortunately turned out well and then I suggested to Sam once more that we get the hell out of there.

Then we ran slap-bang into the middle of a whale circus.

I have heard these whale circuses described but no one seems to know exactly what they are.

As nearly as we could determine from this one, one bull whale was making passes at two cows who had young calves with them and who didn't want any part of more romance. The bull whale was swimming in circles, trying to herd the cows into a watery corral. The frightened calves were riding on Mother's back wherever possible, then jumping completely over Mother and down on the other side.

The whales were so preoccupied

with what they were doing that they were completely oblivious to our circling boats.

Here again, however, we had a problem. If we got close enough to get pictures that would be worth anything we were in such dangerous proximity that if one of the whales came up out of the water and rolled over he could roll directly onto one of the boats. If we stayed far enough away with our motors running so that we were out of danger our pictures wouldn't be good.

We started to play it safe but soon began to take chances and within a short time were circling the churning waters, trying to get pictures.

Once more after a few brief passes we broke off the engagement, convinced that we had pictures that would "knock your eye out." I still think I did have, but that particular magazine of movie film was unaccountably lost somewhere in transit. Sam's black and white camera, as it subsequently turned out, was going through the motions of taking pictures without doing any good, and that was that.

I don't know how a whale stands on his tail, but he does it. Apparently he only does it when he wants to look around, and he prefers to do it during calm weather.

While we were camped on the island, we would look out, usually in the early morning and, at a distance of a mile or so, see whales come up out of the water to stand on their tails. By using binoculars and telescopes we could get a pretty good idea of the procedure. The whale would thrust his head out of the water for ten or twelve feet, then very slowly, and apparently balanced on his tail, thrust up another ten feet or so of his body until he would apparently be standing some twenty feet above the water. He would stand there for what seemed to be four or five seconds, then would slowly submerge, and at such times there would be no splash.

On the other hand, we had seen whales coming up out of the water at great speed, extending their flippers and then lunging downward with a splash that sent water up in the air for what seemed to be a height of thirty or forty feet.

Our friend, Justo, the turtle hunter, told us that at such times the whales were trying to protect their young and were frightening away sharks.

Whether his idea was true or not, it certainly seemed that these were aggressive tactics on the part of whales

and were resorted to for some very definite reason.

There was still a third maneuver which whales made: they would apparently travel at top speed, then come up straight out of the water, not standing on their tails; then they would take a good look around and lunge forward.

We didn't have any pictures showing these activities and the question of whether whales fed or not while they were in southern waters was still a matter of debate. We had seen whales engaged in maneuvers which we thought were associated with feeding, but we couldn't be sure.

At times when the tides would change, we would see whales congregating in the eddies where the tides meet. They would swim around in circles and give every appearance of feeding, but we couldn't see under the water and all we could see were occasional fins, parts of tails and the dipping circle where whales came up, spouted and went down again.

Finally, we struck it rich with the photo below. All the time we were learning more and more about whales.

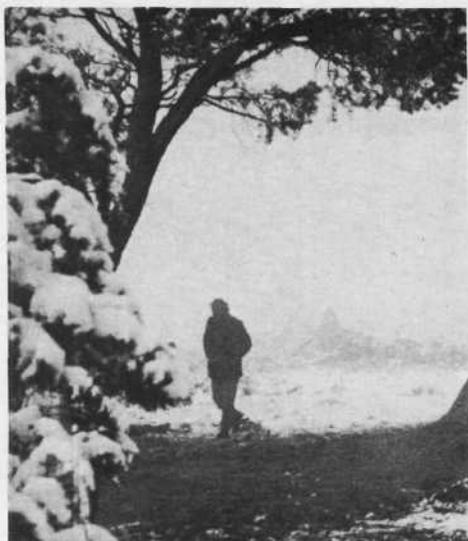
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**Desert Magazine next month:** Erle Stanley Gardner's concluding chapter: **Exploring the Virgin Beach.**



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SO FAR AS KNOWN, THIS IS THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH OF A WHALE FEEDING IN THE WATERS OF SCAMMON'S LAGOON.



# THE BIG SNOW

Northern Arizona in 1931—the year of unseasonable snows . . . The author witnesses a contrast in cultures: the Navajos stoically meet the cold with calm and fortitude; the white-men wire Washington for trucks and planes to bring supplies

By LAURA ADAMS ARMER

*This is the ninth of ten original articles written for Desert Magazine by Laura Adams Armer, pioneer authority on the Navajos*

IN THE WINTER of 1931, I lived in a furnished apartment in Winslow, Arizona, busy writing my second book, *Dark Circle of Branches*. John Curly, a young Navajo, was engaged as interpreter. He called me shama, which is "mother" in his language. I was writing the story of an old medicine man who was born without feet. He was called Na Nai, "he who creeps." John Curly proved untiring in ferreting out the facts of Na Nai's childhood. More than once Lorenzo Hubbell, Jr., drove us across the snow splotted desert to the old man's hogan.

The winter weather came early. Snow fell in flakes until land from mountain peak to sandy wash was buried beneath a wintry blanket. Cold Woman blocked the trails of the wood choppers. Hungry sheep huddled about the hogans. The soft snow would not hold their weight. Navajos shoveled snow hour by hour, digging trenches to juniper trees. The weak and half-frozen sheep followed the shepherds to browse on the green cut from the trees.

The Navajos met Cold Woman as they met the Hunger People—with calm and fortitude. In his hogan, smoking the tobacco Mr. Hubbell brought, Na Nai sat by the fire wrapped in a Pendleton Blanket. He was in a contemplative mood. He spoke of the snow, saying it was a promise of grass for the sheep, a promise of water in the springtime. Said he:

"I have lived long enough to know that snow comes and snow goes, that sky months follow earth months; that stars move westward, night by night; that the four winds of heaven never cease; that the seven mountains lift their peaks to the clouds and that the Star of the North never sets. I have

watched the Morning Star that journeys with the Sun Bearer. Look to the Morning Star, shama. Remember the song in its heart. Out of the white east it comes. Into the evening twilight it goes."

"I shall remember, grandfather. Now, will you tell me how you felt when the American soldiers took your people away to Fort Sumner?"

The old man's eyes took on a hardness. The dreamy quality left them. He answered abruptly:

"I felt afraid of the guns and the bayonets. I was hungry. I was cold. For four years the corn was destroyed by cutworms. Drouth seared what the worms left."

The old man wrapped the blanket closer about him. His voice softened as he said to Mr. Hubbell:

"My grandson, this is good tobacco; better than any we had in the land of our enemies. Did I ever tell you about the beans the Blue Coats gave to us? They were coffee beans. We did not know. We boiled them, and boiled them, and boiled them. For four days we boiled them. What food did we get? No food from coffee beans. We learned to like the water we boiled them in."

Mr. Hubbell laughed. "You had much to learn, grandfather."

"Much, much to learn. Always there is much to learn. Has shama learned about the younger brother of the bear? She painted his tracks around the bear people, but does she know that he is the porcupine, a greater chief than the bear?"

"Shama wishes to learn from you how to draw the porcupine. She has with her the painting you gave her."

I unrolled the paper, unpacked the

water colors. Old Na Nai approved of what I had done. He took the brush in his hand and drew the porcupine by the white mountain.

"Now it is finished in beauty," he said. "It must receive the pollen."

We said goodby and returned to Winslow, Mr. Hubbell to watch out for starving lambs, the interpreter and I to put our notes into shape. The book progressed. When John Curly's work was done he said:

"Goodby, shama. I go now to learn more stories from the medicine men. We shall sit in the hogan on our sheepskins, glad to have wood to burn, coffee to drink, mutton ribs to roast and bubble bread browning in the iron pot. I shall tell the young men how you write pretty scenery about our children and how you called me Shi Yazhi, your 'tenderly growing child.' The winter is here. I go."

Pinyon season had arrived. In the Zuni mountains the yield of pine-nuts promised unusual wealth. Many families were already camped under the trees when Cold Woman turned the camps into mud, slush and wet wood. Some of the Navajos returned to Winslow, bringing with them what nuts they had gathered. Others stayed on stoically, hoping to leave with their wagons and old Ford trucks loaded with full sacks to sell to the traders. The wife of Many Goats remained in the mountains with her husband and children. They chopped limbs from the trees to build shelters, and gathered wood for their camp.

"Just a day or two more," said the valiant woman, "and then we will go home with enough to trade for flour and blankets for the winter. The little one needs a new shirt and shoes."

Snow began to fall that night. In

the early morning when the Indians awoke, they viewed a world mantled in white. The nuts on the ground were buried beneath six inches of snow.

"We will have to spread our blankets beneath the trees," said the wife of Many Goats, "to catch the nuts that fall."

Two more days of snow and colder weather convinced the men that they should leave with what nuts they had gathered. "We will go to the trading post," they said, "and come back with food for our children." Five more days of bad weather and snow piled up so deep that no firewood could be gathered. The despairing women and children went hungry and cold. In the meantime, the outside world of white people, reading their newspapers while they sat comfortably sipping their morning coffee, glanced casually at the report of 400 Navajos marooned on high mesa tops in unseasonable snows. I could not sleep for worry over inaction in the matter of rescue parties. Already eleven Navajos including a baby had frozen to death.

"There are plenty of airplanes in the country. They could drop food and blankets," I said to Mr. Hubbell.

"The clouds are too low for that," he answered. "I've been phoning to the agency. The government has considered relief."

Throughout the morning the telephone at the agency was kept busy with reports from Washington. "Spare no expense. Use airplanes if necessary," wired the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

I, who had felt so desperately helpless as an individual, drew strength from the messages and realized with fervor the power of organization. I knew that government trucks and snow plows were making their way to the nut-pickers. With a National Hunger Army marching to the Capitol; with eight-million white people unemployed in these United States, Washington had come to the rescue of the Navajos.

Three days later, while snow lay a foot deep on the desert, and yard-long icicles hung from the eaves of Winslow houses, the Indians began to straggle home. Some came on the backs of their scrawny ponies; others drove dilapidated Fords. Some came home in government trucks. Mr. Hubbell and I watched the trail for the wife of Many Goats and her family. They came afoot, bedraggled, thin and frost-bitten. She had killed her two ponies

for her family to eat, saving her loved ones from starvation. Confidently, she said to Mr. Hubbell:

"We left five sacks of nuts on the mesa top. We burned our wagon for firewood. We ate our ponies for food, but we gathered five sacks of nuts. Shi Yazhi needs new shoes. I need wool to spin."

I felt my heart beat fast and faster as I listened to the tale of heroism. I knew that hundreds of sheep were starving. Sheep which Mr. Hubbell had bought and paid for were unable to reach the grass buried beneath the snow. I knew that the trader could not give the woman what she needed. In that winter of 1931 he had been taxed to the limit of his resources by the low market prices of wool, mutton and pinyons. I knew that he had no flour to sell to the Navajos, for the wholesalers could no longer give credit. My head was feeling misty; so were my eyes. When we returned to Winslow in the cold of late afternoon, I said to Mr. Hubbell:

"Let us go to the Chinaman's and order two of his fine steaks."

"If we go you will have to pay for the dinner," he answered. "I haven't a cent in my pocket."

This from a successful businessman who in the past could borrow \$50,000 from a local bank with which to buy the sheep of the Navajos. This from a man who had made the practice of traveling from the bank to the trading post with a barrel filled with silver

dollars in the back of his car. (Navajos liked to be paid in silver dollars.)

The cold spell wrought havoc in my small apartment. Water pipes were frozen and punctured. A spray of icy water reached across the kitchen toward the stove, which I laboriously fed with wood. Inefficiently coping with the situation, I admired to the utmost the wife of Many Goats who could chop up her wagon for firewood, slay her ponies for food and come smiling through, turning her thoughts to song. I, with a roof over my head, could not keep warm. It became necessary to move to a modest hotel. There, steam heat battled with the freezing temperature. I looked out of the window onto a dull sky, against whose sodden gray one bare-limbed cottonwood reared its delicate branchlets amid tin chimney pots. Scattering snowflakes fell to the street, powdering the tops of automobiles with white. Old quilts tied about radiators bore evidence of the cold.

With weary acceptance of the ugliness, I turned from the window as the landlady entered the room with my mail. Among the letters was one from the publishers telling me that my book, *Waterless Mountain*, had been awarded the Newberry Medal, and that I was expected to travel to New Orleans in April to receive it. Two months were mine before I left, for study, for listening into my own head. ///

Next installment: the concluding chapter in Mrs. Armer's series: "The Morning Star"



LORENZO HUBBELL IN HIS TRADING POST AT PINON. PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE 1920s.

**P**ICK-AXE BILL was the name I gave the big pale-gray bird that lived on the sand and gravel desert below my shanty in old Palm Springs. It was the way in which Bill (the ornithologists call him a Le Conte Thrasher) used his long down-curved beak that earned him his nickname. Often I could see him running unconcernedly along, then of a sudden stop, look very attentive, and vigorously begin picking away in the sand, making the grains fly right and left as he probed after some hidden adult or larval insect that lay beneath the soil surface.

Bill was a great scouter-about, often running across the open sunny spaces between creosote bushes, seemingly just for exercise.

Very early in the mornings I could hear his clear earnest and energetic far-carrying notes as from his perch atop one of the nearby mesquite bushes he greeted the vernal day. Sometimes it was a very simple clear whistle, almost like a human whistle; at other times I could hear, as Dr. Mearns wrote, a "sharply reiterated *whit* or *quit*." As the bird sang from atop some mesquite twig, its curved beak was visibly open, the head was thrown back, and the tail was hanging well down.

Unlike many of the thrashers, this bird has no spots on the chest or underside of its ashen gray body. This is a plainness of feathered coat that Le Conte Thrashers share with the large, mesquite-loving, darker Crissal Thrasher. One ornithologist figuratively described the former thrasher as a sand-colored bird with most of the color baked out of it by the desert's great heat. It is wholly confined to the hottest parts of southwestern Utah, southern Nevada, eastern

California, western Arizona in areas of open brush and cactus thickets.

The Le Conte Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) was first described from specimens taken at Fort Yuma in Arizona. It was not named after the famous "Joe" Le Conte, great naturalist and physicist who served so ably as first professor of natural history and geology at the University of California at Berkeley; but for his cousin, Dr. John L. Le Conte of Philadelphia, eminent student of birds and beetles.

With an average length of 12 inches, the darker-colored, closely related Crissal Thrasher (*Toxostoma crissale*) is largest of all thrashers. He is called Crissal or Red-vented Thrasher because of the warm chestnut or reddish crissum or undertail coverts, a very distinctive marking among thrashers. This bird, with notably long well-curved beak, is a permanent resident in the Southwestern United States from west Texas to south Utah, south Nevada to southeast California, and in northwest Baja California. It is very partial to the mesquite thickets, but forages among the thorny catsclaw bushes and ironwood trees growing along the sandy washes. It seems also to like rocky canyons where junipers grow, as well as hillsides and fertile valleys where dense vegetation affords it ready shelter. Scarcely ever does it venture out into the open desert. Proximity to water is also a factor in its distribution.

The nest is a huge one (often a foot across), made of sticks — some quite large — and lined with milkweed or other fibers. Within it in late March or early April are laid the unspotted, emerald-green eggs.

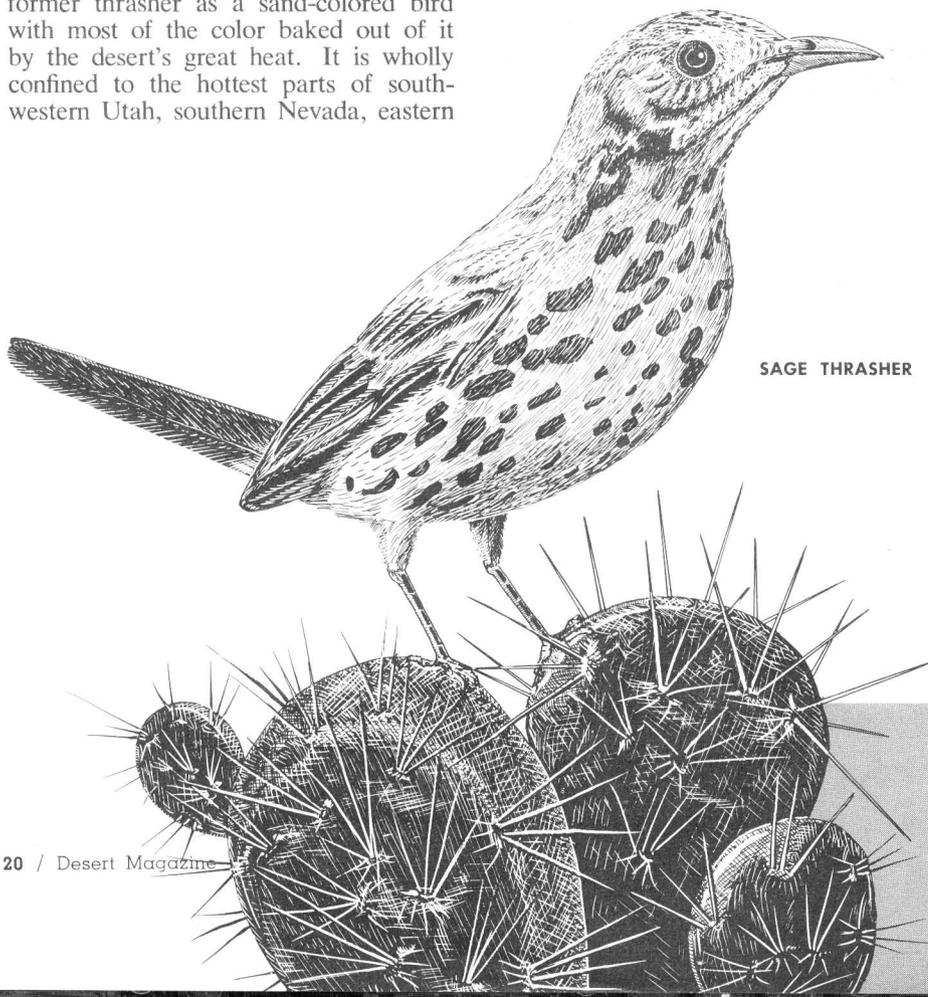
The Crissal Thrasher is a gifted singer; "every note is sweet, true and perfect." Its best songs are the songs of spring. These are followed by summer silence; but often in autumn the full fine song is resumed.

Between the southern end of the plateaulike Sierra Juarez mountain range and the lofty steep-sided Sierra San Pedro Martir of Baja California is a large east-west trending valley known as El Valle de la Trinidad. Its principal woody plants are honey mesquite, desert willow, and numerous cacti—a true desert plant assemblage. Here Chester C. Lamb of the University of California discovered a thrasher much like the Crissal Thrasher but with a larger and more strongly arcuated beak, larger feet, and a feathered coat much darker in color than its close cousin's. It appears to be a very localized sub-species. The traveler passing along the primitive road between Ensenada on the Pacific and San Felipe on the Gulf of California goes through El Valle de la Trinidad, and should watch for this unique bird, named by Dr. Joseph Grinnell, the Trinidad Thrasher (*Toxostoma dosale trinitatis*).

The fourth of the thrashers with long-arched beak is Palmer's Thrasher of southwestern Arizona, northern Chihuahua and northern Sonora, mostly below 3000 feet. It has a white throat and pale brownish under-parts covered with faint spots. The average length is 11 inches, making it among the larger thrashers.

It too is a lover of thick brush country and rocky canyons. Desert soils often show numerous pitlike holes which mark the sites of its many probings for insects. When digging, the bird may press its feet very closely to the ground like a woodpecker, and "if the earth be dry and sandy, a perfect fusillade of dirt is kept up" by the diligent excavator.

Every nest I have seen was set in thickly-branched Bigelow's cholla, with its myriads of glistening needle-like spines, but records show that nests are also sometimes made in thorny jujubes, in lycium bushes or mesquite. Once a nest has been built and used, it may serve as a foundation for other nests, some of them winter roosting nests. If the brooding nest is made in Bigelow's



SAGE THRASHER

cholla, the parent birds may go as far as to pull out all of the cactus spines in the vicinity of the nest, apparently as a means of protecting the tender-bodied young from injury. French Gilman tells of finding one large five-foot cholla which held five old cactus wren nests, and four old and one new Palmer Thrasher nests. Quite a bird hotel!

Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*), confined to Arizona and the plains and brush-covered foothills of Sonora, has a shorter beak that is almost straight and thrushlike. Seldom does this bird leave the flat country. Like the Palmer Thrasher, it has a white throat, but the white is edged by lines of black. Both Palmer's and Bendire's have markings on the breast. Bendire's is at times unusually silent for a thrasher, but has a splendid song if it chooses to sing.

Without a doubt, my close friend, M. French Gilman, knew more about the intimate behavior of our desert thrashers than any other man. Gilman spent many years in Indian Service work in the desert areas of California and Arizona, and as an intelligent patient observer of birds, he had few equals. Read his description of the Bendire's Thrasher's song:

"As for singing, the Bendire's has them all beaten. The others are fine singers, but their repertoire is limited. Not so with Bendire's. No two seem to sing exactly alike, and some of the songs are quite distinct from others. Not only in variety of note, but in arrangement are differences noticed. He is a more constant singer than the others and frequently I discovered a nest by the song of the bird. The earliest date of singing was Jan. 3, and I could hardly believe that Bendire's was the performer. It was a low warbling song with a decided sparrow 'burr' to it. I approached as near as the bird would allow, but could not be sure that he was the singer as no throat movement could be detected. When the bird flew, the song ceased, and began again after he perched on a post . . .

"As the breeding season approached they sang more often, the song becoming louder with less of a 'burr', in fact more like the typical thrasher song, if such there be. The songs were all very pleasing, but the variations were often puzzling at first. Whenever I heard a new strain, I said, 'only another Bendire's tuning up'."

Captain Bendire (1836 - 1897) in whose honor this bird was named, commanded the first military expedition

through Death Valley (1867), and explored the deserts of southern Nevada. In addition to birds that were dedicated to him (a screech-owl, a thrasher and a falcon) his name will be remembered in other fields of science, particularly in connection with his two-volume *Life History of North American Birds*. The series has been continued in *Bent's Life History of North American Birds*, 20 volumes of which had been published up to 1958.

And last we mention the Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), the most unthrasherlike member of its family. The beak is short and straight; its body comparatively small (8¼ inches long); and its attitude on the ground is much like that of a robin. For many years it was listed among the thrushes, probably because of its spotted underparts, and short beak and tail; but its terrestrial habits mark it as a thrasher.

It is one of the most characteristic birds of the vast gray-green semi-arid sagebrush plains of the Great Basin, a habitat it shares with the rare and disappearing Sage Hen. It is very much a migratory species, spending its summers as far north as British Columbia and wintering in parts of northern mainland Mexico (Chihuahua), southern Arizona, southern New Mexico, southern California (Death Valley and southward) and Baja California, occasionally as far south as Cape San Lucas. Its breeding range includes Montana, western South Dakota, western Nebraska, eastern Colorado and the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountains of California.

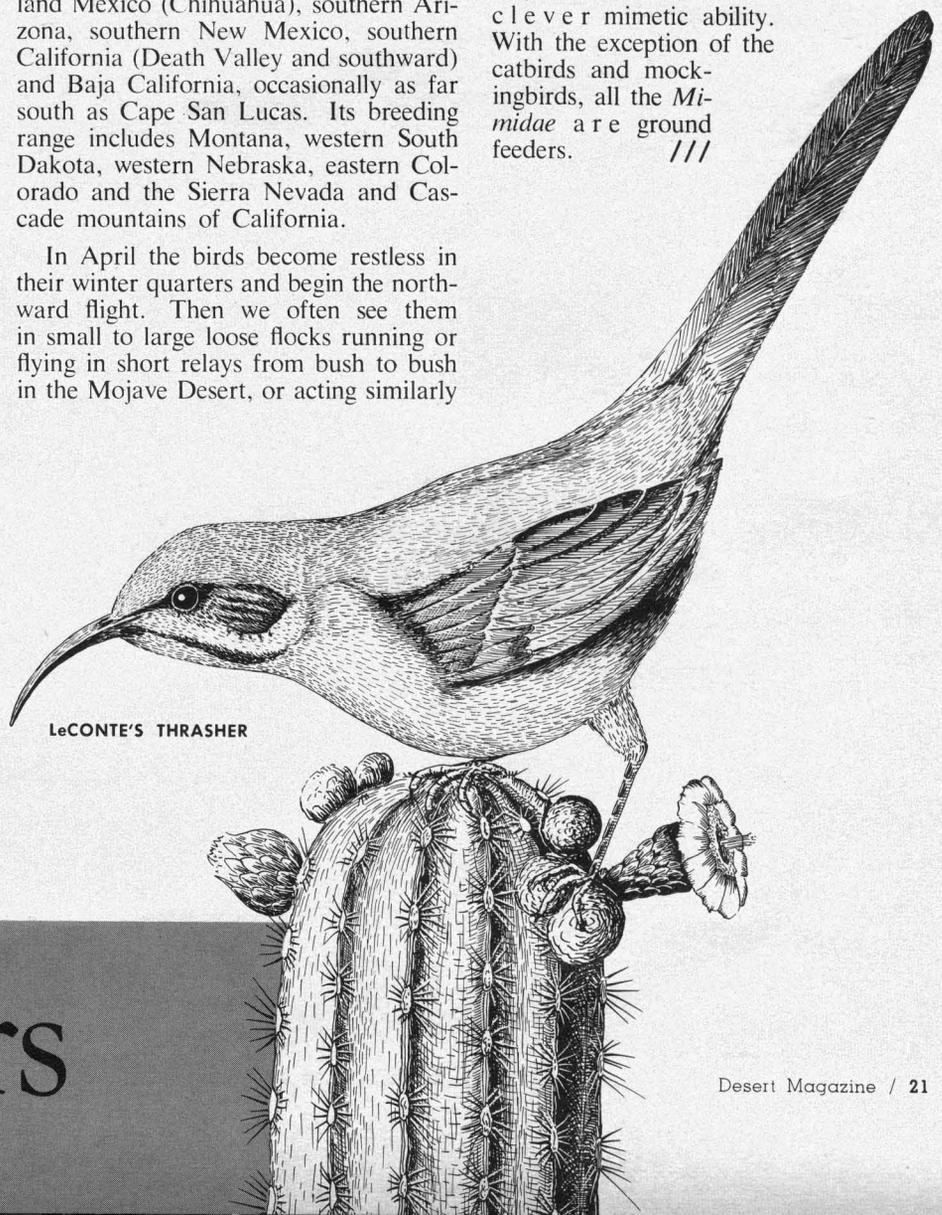
In April the birds become restless in their winter quarters and begin the northward flight. Then we often see them in small to large loose flocks running or flying in short relays from bush to bush in the Mojave Desert, or acting similarly

in the juniper areas of Arizona—always advancing toward the north.

They generally nest in sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), but may build their cozy quarters in rabbitbrush or juniper. It is at the mating season that this poet of the sagebrush plains does its best singing. The unique song of the male is full of fine rich melody and tenderness, with many repetitions of the phrases. It is usually given when the bird is perched on some prominent place such as the summit of a bush.

Generally shy and almost silent during its nesting time, the Sage Thrasher becomes comparatively tame and bold in summer when it fearlessly comes down among the ranches to seek the cultivated fruits and berries. Most of the time it feeds on destructive long-horned grasshoppers and their eggs, chinch bugs, weavils and ants; from time to time wild fruits enter its diet.

The thrashers, along with the catbird and mockingbird, belong to the Family *Mimidae*, which lies between the families of the thrushes and the wrens. All of these birds are apt, sweet-voiced songsters; some, such as the catbird and the mockers, show remarkable and clever mimetic ability. With the exception of the catbirds and mockingbirds, all the *Mimidae* are ground feeders. ///



# Thrashers



# Photo Album Of YESTERDAY'S SOUTHWEST

*Desert Magazine* invites its readers to participate in a quest for rare and interesting photographs of the Great American Desert's pioneer days. A collection of selected photographs will be published this summer by *Desert Magazine* in a hardcover high-quality book.

## The Search Is On!

We will consider for inclusion in the soon-to-be-published "*Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest*" all photographs that meet the requirements listed on the opposite page. Each person who submits one or more photos used in the forthcoming book will receive free a copy of "*Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest*." All photographs submitted will be returned to the sender prior to publication of the book.



**BRAWNY MEN AND TRUE STEEL** especially the Glorious Fourth—was a contest. Each mining district had a grandstand and a grandstand. This photo was taken at Tonopah, Nev., in 1880.



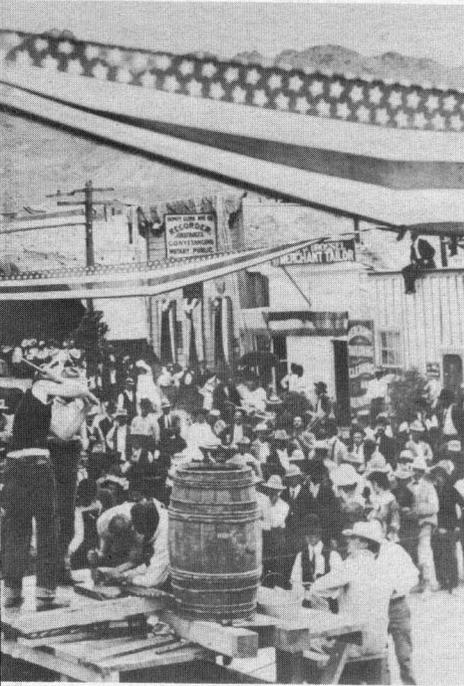
**SALT MINE.** Scraper, powered by donkey engine at end of long cable, harvests salt on the floor of Salton Sink in 1903—three years before flood waters created Salton Sea.



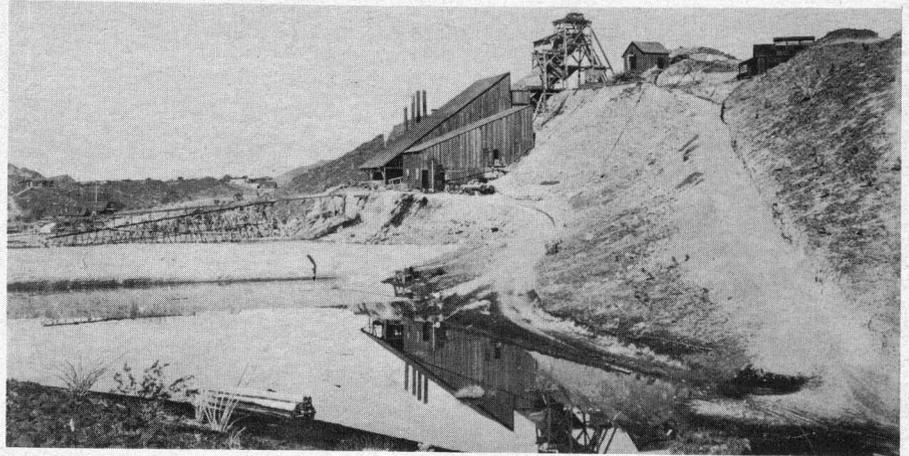
**COLORADO RIVER PASSENGER STEAMBOAT** in Needles, Calif., in 1894. Steamboat was destroyed by flood on December 3, 1852, when the Colorado River flooded the area.



**LONG HAUL ACROSS THE MOJAVE DESERT.** The Rose & Pamers freight team outside Las Vegas, Nevada. Outfits such as these were the lifespring for isolated camps throughout the Southwest.



No Western mine camp celebration—complete without a hard-rock drilling champion, and the crowd often wanted to witness some of the most interesting contests in Nevada, on July 4, 1900. Note "box"



**LA FORTUNA'S PALMY DAYS.** During eight years of peak production—1896-1904—Yuma County's La Fortuna Mine produced \$2½ million in gold. This photo, taken in December, 1897, shows the mill pond, hoist and ore bin of the great Arizona mine.



**SERVICE.** The steamer St. Valier at port boat conquered the unpredictable Colorado River. The "Uncle Sam" landed at Fort Yuma.

### Suggestions for Those Interested in Submitting Photographs for "PHOTO ALBUM OF YESTERDAY'S SOUTHWEST"

1. Pictures should be of good photographic quality; suitable for lithographic book reproduction; of any size up to 10x14 inches.
2. All photographs must have been taken in the Desert Southwest (southeast California, Arizona, Nevada or south Utah) prior to 1911.
3. All photos will be returned to the owner as soon as possible. Photos will not be marked or altered by Desert Magazine. They will be handled with the utmost care, but Desert Magazine cannot assume the risks involved in the transporting and handling of these photos.
4. A full description of each photo should be provided, plainly written or typed on a separate sheet of paper, with the following points covered, in-so-far as possible: where the picture was taken; when taken; if available, full name(s) of person(s) shown in photograph; name of photographer; and a short description about the picture. We want "Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest" to be as accurate as possible, so care is urged in preparing written descriptions of photos. The more detailed the description, the better chance the photo has of being used in the book.
5. Name and mailing address of the person sending in the entry should accompany each photograph. This will insure proper credit being given to the contributor.
6. Each person who has one or more photographs accepted for use in "Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest" will receive as full payment for use of said photo(s), one copy of "Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest."
7. In the event duplicate or similar photos of any one subject are submitted to Desert Magazine, the photo which will reproduce best will qualify its owner to receive a complimentary copy of "Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest."
8. All entries automatically become eligible for use in Desert Magazine or in any other printed form that the publishers of Desert Magazine may deem necessary to promote "Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest."
9. Photos submitted must be free of copyright or royalty restrictions. Please do not send framed photographs, drawings, sketches, photostats of old documents, or illustrations clipped from old newspapers or other periodicals. Only black-and-white or sepia photos are wanted.
10. Here are some suggested photo subjects: mining camps and boom towns, transportation (wagons, trains, early vintage automobiles, historic boats on the Colorado River), forts, military camps or engagements, lynchings, towns and "Western" main streets, agriculture and irrigation, real estate booms, roads and trails, homes, mines, mills, bridges, schools. But remember: no matter what the subject, the picture must have been taken in the Desert Southwest, and it must be at least 50 years old.
11. Entry deadline is May 20, 1961.
12. Carefully wrapped and packaged photos and accompanying descriptive material should be mailed to:

**"PHOTO ALBUM"**  
Desert Magazine  
Palm Desert, Calif.

# let's hike to where the palms grow wild!

## 10 OASES IN THE CANYONS ABOVE PALM DESERT

By RANDALL HENDERSON



COASTING down Southern California's zig-zag Palms-to-Pines Highway not long after its completion in the 1930s, I stopped one day at a little roadside cabin about halfway down the grade. There was no one at home, but on the lean-to porch was posted this sign:

Welcome to Hidden Palms  
Relax and forget the world  
Enjoy yourself  
Nothing for sale

Following a rock-rimmed trail which led to a hilltop behind the cabin, I saw nestling deep in a narrow canyon below an inviting palm oasis, of which there

are over 100 on the Southern California desert. A path led down into the gorge and when I reached the palms I found a spring of good water surrounded by tracks indicating this was a watering place for the bighorn sheep of the Santa Rosa game refuge.

On later visits to this cabin I became acquainted with Virgil Adair, the owner. From him I learned there were wild palms in nearly all the canyons in this area. Virgil was working a nearby feldspar claim, and was the self-appointed guardian of the palm oasis at which he got his water.

He has long since passed away, and the orderly rock gardens which surrounded his cabin have fallen into disarray; but the palms are still there—55 of them according to my last count. Although this oasis is within a hundred

yards of the Palms-to-Pines paved road (Highway 74), the trees are not visible from the paving, and hundreds of motorists pass this way every day without realizing that concealed deep in a narrow gorge just a few steep paces away is one of the prettiest palm oases on the Colorado desert.

In the years since that first visit to Hidden Palms I have explored the other canyons Virgil told me about, and my log book now lists nine main and tributary canyons draining into the Palm Desert cove where one or more wild palms are growing. Also, there is a lovely palm garden on the north slope of Sheep Mountain above the neighboring cove of La Quinta, and there are several natives of the palm family in Magnesia Canyon which drains into the Rancho Mirage cove to the west.

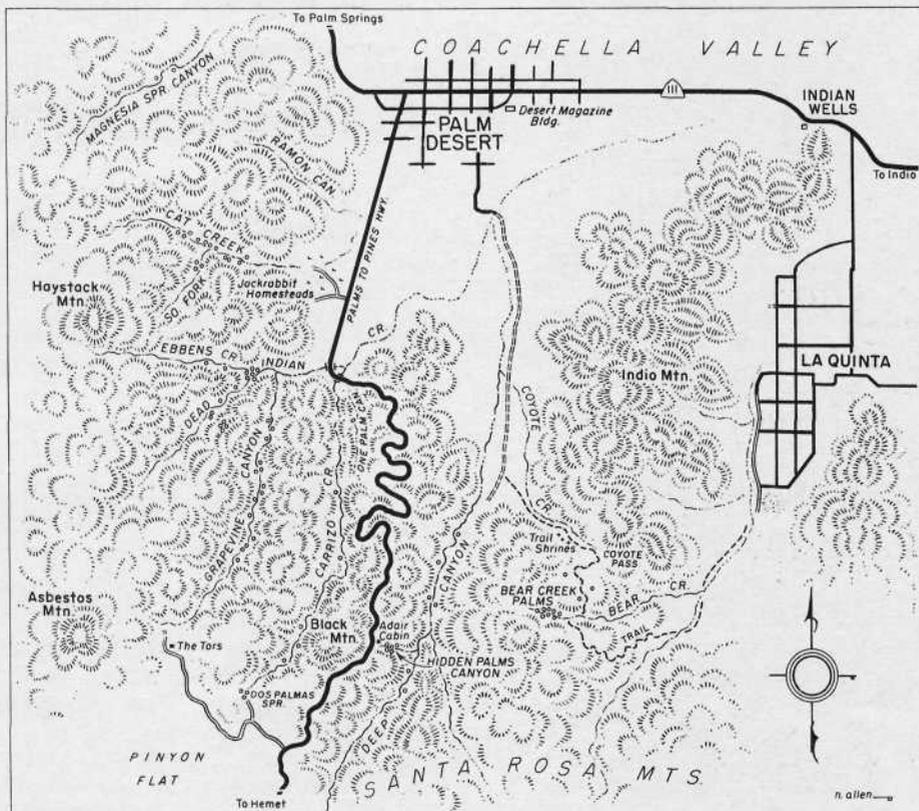
Within a radius of 10 miles of Palm Desert, and following the perimeter of the cove as shown on the accompanying map, these palm canyons are as follows:

### CAT CREEK PALMS

This creek is easily identified by motorists on Highway 74 because Section 36 at the mouth of the canyon has been subdivided by Uncle Sam for jack-rabbit homesteaders. Nearly all the 5-acre owners have built cabins which spread over the landscape in all directions. Some of these cottages are very attractive. The dry course of Cat Creek runs through the middle of the section. Farther up, where the mountains close in to form a rocky gorge, there is nearly always a flowing stream with waterfalls and crystal pools.

I counted 395 wild palms in Cat Creek, ranging from an elevation of 800 feet at the mouth of the canyon to 2800 feet where the main channel breaks up into a score of small streambeds draining the east side of Haystack Mountain. On one trip up this canyon I saw two bighorn sheep silhouetted against the skyline above me. They stared at me a few minutes, then disappeared over the ridge.

About two miles from the mouth of the canyon the stream divides, and there are 29 native palms in the south fork. These trees are all of the *Washingtonia filifera* species common to the Southern California desert. The trees range in age from tiny seedlings to fire-scarred veterans perhaps 150 years old. Where the trees have been burned, the fire probably was caused by lightning, although prehistoric Indians who came to all the canyons in this area to hunt bighorns and gather palm seeds for food, are said to have burned the dry frond skirts in some instances because of a superstitious belief that they harbored evil spirits. I can believe this legend





A GROUP OF NATIVE PALMS: MAJESTIC AND MYSTERIOUS

for, camping under the palms many times, I have been awakened by rustlings in the dry fronds. Birds, bats and even rodents sometimes find concealment in the palm skirts.

#### DEAD INDIAN CREEK

Motorists departing from Palm Desert on Highway 74 cross two bridges where the paving leaves the floor of the bajada to climb the mountain grade. The first of these bridges spans Dead Indian Creek—dry except after heavy storms. A short mile upstream—but not visible from the road—is a stately oasis of 22 palms so closely huddled together that the hiker trying to penetrate them can almost imagine himself scrambling through a tropical jungle.

The creekbed appears to end at this point—but this is not true. If he will scale the dry waterfall on the right he will arrive in Ebbens Creek, a tributary of Dead Indian. This creek generally is dry, but there is water underneath the sand, for scattered at intervals along the streambed are occasional palms which, because of the inaccessibility of the canyon, are seldom visited by human beings. This creek was named for an old prospector, Frying Pan Ebbens, who worked for the U.S.G.S. in making the original surveys of this area. Ebbens was an eccentric, and his nickname derived from the half-dozen or more frying pans he always packed on his burros.

The main course of Dead Indian Creek continues to the left of the 22-palm oasis. After climbing a steep talus slope, the creekbed levels off, and at intervals there are pools of water and little groups of palm trees. The waterholes in this canyon are often visited by the bighorn sheep.

Upper Dead Indian Creek is a precipitous gorge, and the hiker often has to detour dry waterfalls. There are old Indian trails on the slopes above the creekbed, but they are hard to follow because of changes wrought by flood-water on this rocky terrain. At one point near the headwaters of Dead Indian the rocks are piled in great monuments, as if some ancient race of giants had been staking out mining claims and marking the location corners with great slabs too heavy for any ordinary mortal to lift.

#### GRAPEVINE CREEK

A tributary of Dead Indian is Grapevine Creek, a precipitous gorge which can be ascended only by rock-climbers with ropes and pitons. After spending a day trying to make my way up the creekbed, I returned later with two companions and worked my way down from the top, using rope to rappel the dry waterfalls. We started from The Tors, the cabin of Nina Paul Shumway whose

water supply is a spring near the headwaters of Grapevine Creek on Asbestos Mountain.

We started at the 4000-foot level, and at 3100 feet reached the first of several palm groups which grow along the creek. This is a lovely area of Upper Sonoran Zone vegetation—*Rhus ovata*, wild apricot, nolina, juniper, yucca, cats-claw, ephedra, jojoba—the most varied and striking of all the botanical zones in my estimation. We counted 101 wild palms over three feet in height, and there were many pools of water, but no flowing stream. We roped down over two 30-foot waterfalls in the lower canyon. I am sure this canyon will never suffer from the vandalism which so often is noted in areas of easy access and heavy traffic.

### CARRIZO CREEK

The next creek in the perimeter of the Palm Desert cove is Carrizo, which has its headwaters at Dos Palmas Spring, easily reached by a sideroad from Highway 74. This road is also the approach to Mrs. Shumway's cabin and the well-planned Pinyon Crest development of Robert Waters and his associates. They have carefully contoured their roads to preserve the native trees and shrubbery of this scenic Upper Sonoran Zone Natural park, and a number of desert dwellers have erected substantial homes at this 4000-foot elevation.

Dos Palmas is Spanish for "two palms," but the two palms at the spring have increased to three—and on the six-mile hike down the canyon I encountered four more—all young trees growing where there are springs or cienegas. There was no flowing water in the creek in August when I made the trek. In the lower canyon where I could see the floor of the desert only a mile below, I came to a 150-foot dry waterfall. It would have been a precarious descent without a rope, and I detoured over a ridge to the next watercourse to the east. This is a short canyon that has never been dignified with an official name, and I listed it in my notes as One Palm Creek, for I came upon a lively spring in a little thicket of vegetation where a single palm was growing.

### DEEP CANYON

I have listed seven canyons west of the Palm-to-Pines Highway where wild palms are growing. East of the highway there are at least three more palm oases. One of these is Hidden Palms to which I have already referred. Hidden Palms Creek is a tributary of that great gash in the north slope of the Santa Rosa Mountains known as Deep Canyon. Without doubt it is the most precipitous of all the granite gorges in this area, and is familiar to everyone who travels the Palms-to-Pines Highway.

I had often wondered what scenic treasure might be found in this gorge, and I learned the answer in 1938 when friends invited me to join them in a downstream traverse from Pinyon Flats at the 4000-foot level.

In July, we found in the bottom of this chasm a thousand pools of blue-green water. There was a little stream most of the way, but occasionally it disappeared beneath the sand and reappeared farther down. Sometimes we could wade these pools, and occasionally the choice was swim or detour. With the temperature at 108 degrees, it wasn't a hard choice to make.

Our first climbing problem was a 75-foot sheer drop, with a spray of water going over the falls. There was no way to detour, and neither a rock nor tree to serve as belay for our rope. My friends knew about this for they had attempted a previous descent. They had



brought a hammer and chisel and we soon drilled a hole in a granite boulder for a belay pin. We rappelled down the face of the falls in a refreshing shower of water, and swam out of the pool at the bottom.

This was the first of four waterfalls we encountered that day. The next was a 60-foot drop, the third 50 feet, and the last one the daddy of them all—100 feet. We were never dry that day.

Deep Canyon is clean. By that, I mean the great torrents which sweep down this narrow gorge periodically uproot any vegetation which may have appeared since the last storm. We counted 41 palms, and these invariably were growing up on little ledges on the sidewalls above the flood level. There were also many cottonwood trees. Evidently their root system enables them to withstand the floods better than the shallow-rooted palms.

It is at the mouth of Deep Canyon, where the steep-walled gorge opens up into a wide arroyo, that the University of California at Riverside has established a wildlife sanctuary for scientific study of desert flora and fauna. This sanctuary was made possible through a gift of the land by Philip L. Boyd, a regent of the University. Lloyd Tevis, Jr., of Rancho Mirage is resident director of the reserve.

### BEAR CREEK

The last palm canyon on my list—the tenth—is a lovely oasis on the north slope of Sheep Mountain along a watercourse which drains to the La Quinta cove east of Palm Desert. These are the Bear Creek palms, accessible from La Quinta by an excellent 5-mile trail. When I first visited them there was a little stream of water among the trees, but in recent years it has disappeared. However, the healthy condition of the palms indicates there is ample water below the surface.

In 1936 I counted 84 adults and 300 young palms less than three feet in height. Eleven years later there were 172 trees over six feet and at least 250 smaller ones. It is gratifying to report that the palm census in all the canyons I have mentioned is increasing, and the figures I have quoted would not be accurate today.

Whence came these semi-tropical trees which thrive only where underground water is abundant? We do not know the answer. It is not true—as some unknowing persons have reported—that they were planted by the Jesuit and Franciscan padres who first came to the desert region. They were here many thousands of years before the white man came to the Southwest. Fossil palm root has been found at a number of places on the desert.

There is every reason to believe they date back to a period when much of the desert we know today was inundated, or threaded with swamps and bayous. The original palms undoubtedly grew along the shores of inland seas or waterways. When the climate changed, they survived along fault lines where underground water seeped close to the surface. They are found today along the San Andreas fault which extends across the north side of the Coachella Valley at the base of the Little San Bernardino Mountains, and in the Borrego Badlands where there has been no surface water within the memory of living humans.

I am convinced the palms found in the canyons bordering this desert valley were carried there as seeds by Indians or coyotes, or both. The Indians ground the seeds for meal and undoubtedly carried them to their camping places along canyon streams. Coyotes eat the seeds, but digest only the sweet skins. I have found coyote dung containing undigested palm seeds in nearly all the canyons where the trees grow today. The coyote is a chicken-thief and camp robber—but he has his virtues. Unwittingly of course, but nevertheless it is probably true that he, more than any other agency, deserves the major part of the credit for the many palms which are a distinctive feature of the canyons surrounding the Coachella Valley today. ///

# NEW DESERT BOOKS

## AN EARLY-DAY LOST MINE HUNT

The *Cement Hunters* has nothing to do with hunting for cement. Actually, the hunters were looking for gold—the lost mine variety at that. This beautifully printed 52 page work is a reprint of news reports sent to various West Coast papers by James W. A. Wright, a mining correspondent of the 1870s.

The "cement" referred to in the booklet's title is a red lava that hid a fabulous and phantasmal gold horde somewhere in the Sierra Nevadas, near Mammoth City. Wright didn't try to find the lost lode; he was content to spin the yarns he heard as he moved from gold camp to gold camp.

The smallish volume deserves several credits: Dawson's Book Shop sponsored it; Richard E. Lingenfelter edited it; Margaret Atkinson illustrated it with some typical Sierra sketches; and J. Wilson McKenney's Wilmac Press of San Mateo, California, printed the job, using hand-set type in the early pages. Cost \$8.50, printing limited to 200 copies. (See footnote.)

## THE HISTORY OF NEVADA'S OLD CAMPS

Those who like to explore ghost towns or who enjoy tales of the early mining days of the West will want to put in their kit bag a new publication: *Rocky Trails of the Past*, a 222-page book about Nevada mining camps that have, in the most part, already laid their history to rest.

Author Charles H. Labbe of Las Vegas, though not a florid writer, has good first-hand knowledge of the Nevada mining country. If anything, his descriptions are too brief—but then, he covers a whole state and a century or more in one booklet, so brevity is required.

Some illustrations. Paperbound. \$3.50. (See footnote.)

## ALL ABOUT PEYOTE AND ITS CEREMONY

*Peyotism and New Mexico* is a little booklet by C. Durton Dustin that attempts to explain the origins of the cactus-eating ritual practiced by Indians who are members of the Native American Church. Mr.

Dustin is strong for the Indians and their historical rights to use peyote, which some sources say is a narcotic. Photographs of a peyote ceremony highlight this 50-page offering. \$2 from Desert Magazine Book Store (see below).

## ARCHEOLOGY FOR KIDS— AND ADULTS, TOO

*The Story of Archeology in the Americas* by Mary Elting and Franklin Folsom is a scientifically correct book dealing with the Ancient Ones of the Americas. Happily, the book also is well written, and its many splendid illustrations increase interest.

The questing mind of youth may be stimulated into search for answers to the many questions still unanswered in the archeological field. This book should have a wide appeal. A child of three and a half years discovered a beautiful white-and-black dipper. It stirred his interest, and he became a famous authority on Indian Americans. A nine-year-old boy's interest in arrowheads led him to a life as an archeologist.

Why should the preservation of charcoal, found in ancient sites be important? Did ancient Asians sail boats to the Americas, bringing ideas which sprouted and spread? Why did the desert resemble a page from some vast geometry book? Camels in Ne-

vada? Elephants, saber-toothed tigers and other fearsome creatures native to the Americas? These and many more questions are dealt with in this book. "In things you can see *people*—that's archeology."

The book sells for \$2.95. Excellent for children—and adults will enjoy it, too. (See footnote for purchasing details.)

Books reviewed on this page can be purchased by mail from Desert Magazine Book Store, Palm Desert, California. Please add 15c for postage and handling per book. California residents also add 4% sales tax. Write for free book catalog.

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## California Desert Wildflower Trails

**E**ARLY THIS spring as we drove hundreds of miles on flower trails of other years, we found for the most part only pale dry shrubs on pale desert sand or dark volcanic slopes. When we did see young green of annuals, the skeletons of earlier springs towered over them.

But even if flower-masses do not exist, there are two compensating factors. First, there are several wildflower shows scheduled, and however scant the roadsides, there always are flowers in some remote haunt.

Two shows will be held April 15-16, one in Morongo Valley on Twentynine Palms Hwy. above Coachella Valley, and the other at Hi Vista, 22 miles northeast of Lancaster.

The first will be in Morongo Valley Lodge, with wildflower seeds and booklets being given to visitors, and colored flower movies being shown, reports chairman Maxine Crotsenburg. Flowers will be Colorado Desert and High Desert species of Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

At Hi Vista, the 29th Spring Wildflower Festival will have flowers of San Bernardino, Kern and Los Angeles counties. Even with lack of much rain, the committee headed by Mrs. Mildred Wood expects to have over 150 flower species, including Phacelia, Coreopsis, Birds-eye Gilia, Desert Asters, Paintbrush, Purple Sage, Owls Flower, Primroses, and Desert Candle. Lunch will be available Saturday, and ham dinner Sunday, with entertainment Sunday afternoon.

Flowers of northeast Kern and northwest San Bernardino counties will be exhibited



THE DESERT IN BLOOM—BUT NOT THIS SPRING, BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF RAINFALL. PHOTO SHOWS HARPER DRY LAKE ON THE MOJAVE DESERT COVERED WITH A FLOWERY SEA.

at the 17th Wildflower Show, April 22-23, in China Lake Community Center, at NOTS near Ridgecrest. This year's theme is "Behold! the Desert."

Julian Wildflower Show (Hwy. 78), while not strictly desert, has included many desert species during its long history. It starts the day before Mother's Day and continues through May.

City-bound folks can enjoy wildflowers by going to Los Angeles County Museum from now to May 15 to view wildflower paintings by Jane Pinheiro of Quartz Hill.

Her collection was given to Theodore Payne Wild Life Sanctuary Foundation.

A subject which brings us to the second offset for a dry year: Whatever inroads development makes on the desert, visitors in future good flower years will be assured of finding certain places where wildflowers have priority over housing developments and industry. Besides federal, state and county parks already established, several new preserves have just been set aside.

These include three sanctuaries plus Joshua Trees State Park, all in Antelope Valley area and reached east from Hwy. 6 or west from Hwy. 395. The 320-acre Theodore Payne Wild Life Sanctuary, at 233rd St. East and Ave. V (some 25 miles east of Lancaster) was dedicated in January. The name honors the man who for 70 years popularized the beauty and utility of our native plants through his business in Los Angeles. He has turned over all his stock and materials to the non-profit foundation, which will carry on the work of education and conservation.

Leaving the Sanctuary and driving west on Hwy. 138, turn north on paved 165th St., past Llano Farms; gradually jogging west and north (follow Antelope Valley Indian Museum signs) to 150th St. and Ave. J. Turn east on the latter, driving 2.2 miles to Joshua Trees State Park, dedicated 12 months ago. Besides the headquarters building, there are picnic tables in picturesque spots among great granite boulders—all with sweeping views of the Joshua-studded slopes of Saddleback Butte and the San Gabriel Mountains. Largest Joshua are near the east-end of the 2000-acre park, set aside after six years of effort by the Antelope Valley State Park Committee, headed by the above-mentioned artist, Jane Pinheiro.

Butte Valley Wild Flower Sanctuary is reached by continuing east on Ave. J to 190th St. and turning north for a half mile. This is just south of Hi Vista, about 19 miles east of Lancaster.

Phacelia Wildlife Sanctuary, at 200th St.

# 1st Printing Sold Out In 2½ Months!



The 2nd printing of

Ed Ainsworth's

"PAINTERS OF THE DESERT"

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First edition price of \$9.35 per copy will be honored on all mail-orders for "Painters of the Desert" received by Desert Magazine Book Store, Palm Desert, Calif., on or before April 1, 1961. After that date, the book will retail for \$11. (Please add 15c for postage; Calif. residents also add 4% sales tax.)

"PAINTERS OF THE DESERT" is a large, handsomely-printed book featuring 13 of the Southwest's most famous artists. The 2nd edition will contain 13 color plates, plus black-and-white reproductions of desert art.

East and Ave. D, will be dedicated April 15, at 11 a.m. in conjunction with the two-day Hi Vista Wildflower Festival. The sanctuary is sponsored by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, assisted by the Wild Life Conservancy Club.

There is a special aptness in the choice of these sanctuaries. Although this part of the western Mojave Desert is not so well known to desert visitors, the flowers here have been famous among students of history and botany since 1844. In that year John Charles Fremont, having ridden horseback with his party down California's Central Valley, was turning homeward after his first Far West expedition. On April 16, they emerged through a pass in the Tehachapis, and as Fremont gazed upon the Mojave, he noted the Joshua trees, the outstanding plant feature; the buttes that are characteristic of Antelope and Fremont Valleys; then to the southeast 20 miles away he saw what appeared to be variegated sandstones. He found after riding all day that they were "red stripes of flowers" which "consisted principally of the rich orange-colored California poppy, mingled with other flowers of brighter tints..." Continuing south of east they came upon a veritable flower field. Fremont said of it: "instead of green, the hills were purple and orange, with unbroken beds, into which each color was separately gathered. A pale straw-color, with a bright yellow, the rich red orange of the poppy mingled with fields of purple, covered the spot with floral beauty..."

Many travelers since Fremont have written of the fields of poppies, lupine and mallow that stretched from the western Mojave northwest. They also have expressed alarm at obliteration of wildflower fields, as ranches, homes and towns have appeared. But thanks to the efforts of many, there now are preserves in the desert through which Fremont rode 117 years ago.

Because of scant rain this year, fields such as Fremont reported will not be seen, but the preserves are there, and in years of favorable weather, visitors can be assured of a floral treat. (However I wondered as we recently visited the sanctuaries, how sheep and cattle are going to be excluded from these now-unfenced areas.)

Flowers this April need not be ruled out entirely. For instance, if you know of any area which had an inch or more rainfall last fall, you may find flowers blooming now. But not many desert stations received that much rain. In the Ridgecrest-China Lake area, rainfall from October to December 1960 totaled 0.89 inch; the fall preceding the exceptional spring of 1958, rainfall was 1.24 inches for the same period. Victorville area had half as much rain as the previous year, and Twentynine Palms area had even less. In many desert places there was just enough rain to start annuals sprouting. Warm weather that followed forced them to flower while still pigmy size. Some spots received terrific downpours in September, such as Red Rock Canyon and the Garlock Road junction with Hwy. 395, but unless this rain soaked one to two feet deep, such rains are not effective. There are highway shoulders which will show some color, especially where graders broke up the soil so it could absorb pavement runoff.

In the Colorado Desert the big show of annuals is usually over by April—except in good years. However, Paloverde and Ocotillo, some Cactus, Chuparosa, Encelia and Indigo may be seen.

There are always spring flowers in Joshua Tree National Monument, between the two

deserts, but no real display is expected this year.

Northwest of Barstow, in Harper Dry Lake and the Opal-Black Mountains, there is potential of millions of flowers, but the seeds produced in that sea of flowers three years ago probably will await a better year. Then, the lakebed was so covered with flowers that they grew in several levels, the tall pastel Gilias billowing over Yellow Primrose, Verbena, Golden Gilia, Namas, Owls Flower, Mentzelia, Larkspur, and many others; and on the nearby slopes and mountains, were Wallflower, Phacelia, Tidy Tips, Aster, Thistle Sage, Brodiaea, Evening Snow, Poppies, Chia, and Desert Plume, to name but a few.

Continuing west from here on Hwy. 466 to Hwy. 395 and north to Rand District, an outstanding species is the strange Desert Candle or Squaw Cabbage, with Aster, Thistle Sage, Gilias and many others in good years.

Back to the southeast, the Providence Mountains, in which new Mitchell Caverns State Park is located (22 mi. north of Essex on Hwy. 66), have long been noted for flowers, but with half the rainfall of last year, park supervisor Eugene Junette concludes: "it looks as if the display will be poor." April and May are usually the best months there.

The graded Kelbaker Road, between Hwys. 66 and 91, which in good years is spectacular with Lower and Upper Sonoran species, received too little rain for big displays, but considerable young growth was showing March 1, with Purple Phacelia, Primroses, Rafinesquia and Mentzelia just starting, and Apricot Mallow leafing.

The area from Baker to Salt Springs, on Hwy. 127, although generally barren, may have Beavertail and Strawberry Cacti blooming in April. These, with low Cholla and Cotton-top Cactus, also are abundant above entrance to Furnace Creek Canyon west of Death Valley Junction.

Some rather optimistic reports are coming out of the Borrego-Anza area in the western Colorado Desert. For you who will want one last drive through the desert before summer sets in, here is a detailed report on that area:

Before entering Borrego from the San Diego area, you can see Ocotillo along Highway 78 in the vicinity of the two turnoffs. The lower, or east, branch is about 23½ miles west of Highway 99, and upper or Yaqui Pass branch (at Tamarisk Grove camp) less than nine miles farther. The latter is 7 mi. east of Scissors Crossing.

Taking either branch, you pass, besides

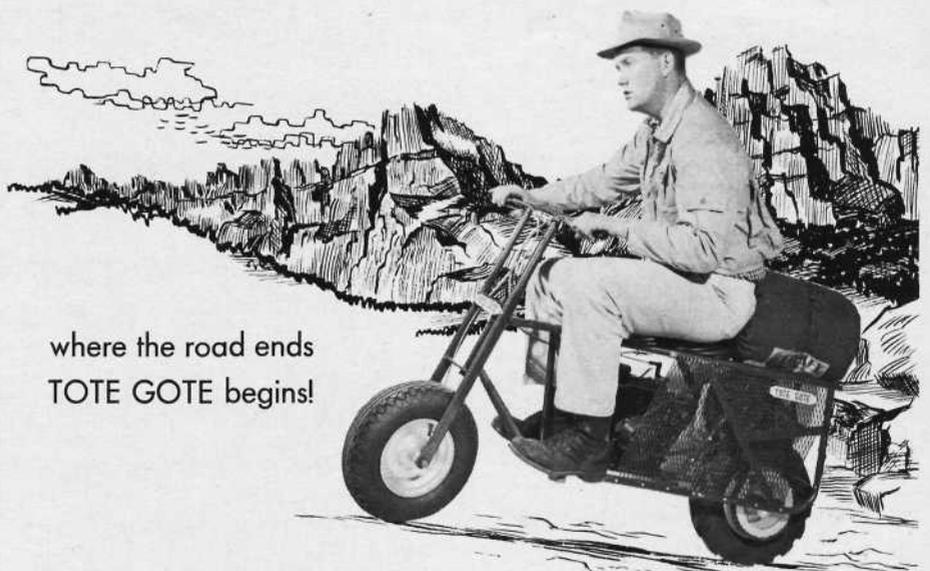
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Ocotillo, many Barrel Cactus, Agaves (Mescal), Bigelow and Deerhorn Cholla, Engelmann or Strawberry Cactus and Beavertail. The latter is one of the early-blooming cacti, with large rose-colored flowers. Descending into the Valley, out of the rocky pass, you should find the early annuals.

The pink-magenta Sand Verbena some years carpets the floor, embroidered with

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white flowers of Dune Evening Primrose and Desert Lily. Often with them are fragrant Desert Sunflower (Geraea), lavender or blue Phacelias and Gilias, Desert Dandelion (Malacothrix), Loco, white Pincushion (Chaenactis) and gold Coreopsis. To see many of the exquisite miniatures, you should walk among them — Desert Star sprinkled over the rather rocky places, the crimson Mimulus and gold Eriophyllum.

To find other kinds of flowers, drive past Christmas Circle (center of Borrego Springs townsite 11.6 miles from Hwy. 78 by the lower branch) and on to Anza-Borrego Desert Park camp (3.65 miles farther to end of road). From here you can hike up Palm Canyon or others nearby and find an even greater variety. Some of the chaparral species almost reach the desert floor, and past the first group of palms, 1½ miles from the end of road, you encounter Upper Sonoran species.

The Incense Bush, with long stemmed yellow-rayed flowers radiating from a mound of whitish leaves, crimson Chuparosa, and the Apricot Mallow are among the common perennials you are likely to find as you start up the canyon. Also if you keep going you should see Chuckawalla's Delight (Bebbia), Lupines, various Evening Primroses, Thistle Poppy, the tall Desert Lavender.

If you look carefully along the trail you may see the Yellow Felt Plant (Horsfordia newberryi), a rather rare mallow named for Dr. J. S. Newberry who was geologist-paleontologist with the Williamson Railroad Survey in this area in 1853. The Pink Felt Plant (*H. alata*) often is found with it. If you hike far enough you may find Indian Paintbrush, Pentstemons and Larkspurs.

Many have picnicked at the first palm group where a pool of crystal water marked an Indian campsite. In this canyon, 778 palms were counted by Randall Henderson 20 years ago, 116 of them in this first group—counting only those over six feet high. He also found many others in canyons of the San Ysidros, describing and mapping them in early *Desert Magazine* issues.

One of the surprises, to one exploring the Borrego Badlands east of the Valley, is the finding of flowering shrubs and annuals in the deep cut washes in what looks like the World's most barren country. A favorite of mine is the shrubby Desert Aster, with lavender rays and yellow centers.

Besides the main campground near the mouth of Palm Canyon, the Park has one at Sheep Canyon, 15 miles northwest of Borrego Springs, for those with four-wheel vehicles. There is another camp at Tamarisk Grove, on Highway 78 at the junction of upper Borrego branch. Farther south in the huge park are camps at Box Canyon and Bow Willow. For detailed data and maps write the Park or Chamber of Commerce, Borrego Springs, California. The motels vary from \$5 per couple to \$30. It is advisable to make reservations, especially during Easter Week. The Chamber will send you a motel list with phone numbers.

We've saved the best for the last. For there are more enthusiastic predictions out of Death Valley than any place we have heard from. On March 1 desert sunflower

(Geraea) and brown-eyed evening primrose were the main species in central Death Valley, with Jubilee Pass being reported the best flowering area. Look in the dunes near Stovepipe for sand-verbena. In higher canyons and passes there should be Mojave aster, paintbrush, pentstemons, larkspurs, blazing stars and several cacti in April and May. And don't forget to stop at Wildrose Spring, above Wildrose Station, to see if the roses are blooming.

While wildflowers dominate the California deserts' Calendar of April events, our neighbor state of Arizona has these varied activities scheduled: April 5-9: Yuma County Fair; 7-9: 14th Annual Valley of the Sun Square Dance Festival at Tempe High School; 10-14: Desert Caballeros Ride, Wickenburg (the Las Damas Ride takes place April 25-28); and April 22-May 14: 26th Annual Junior Art Show at the Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff. ///



Bill Hoy photo

### FOURTH 1961 INVITATION

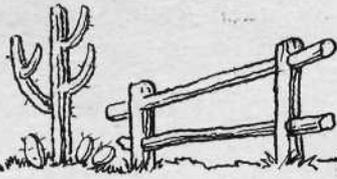
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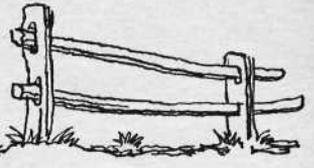
- 1961 is the final year to boat GLEN CANYON in its virgin beauty.
- 1962 will see the closing of the gates of the diversion tunnels, and the flooding forever by the rising waters of the new LAKE POWELL, behind GLEN CANYON DAM near PAGE, Arizona.
- All plans to preserve RAINBOW BRIDGE are to be abandoned by all government agencies.
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FOR SALE—mounted moosehead, biggest specimen 62" wide, 19" high, 20 points, \$85. Elk horns, 48" wide, 20" high, 12 points, \$40. F.O.B. Wanted—used hats as shown on cover January "Desert" and small desert curios and colored glass. Duffy's Trademart, 4385 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia.

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## Best Time to See the Real Virginia City

**A** CENTURY AGO, Virginia City was a makeshift Nevada village bursting with ambition. Ten years later it was the biggest city in the Desert Southwest—a creator of fortunes, financial empires, railroads and statehood for Nevada. Today, its once-fabulous silver mines idle, Virginia City is a small town again—but it's quite a town!

Virginia City is probably the only museum piece that is still alive and going places. Its archaic architecture and wildly beautiful setting make it a haven for the migrating camera bugs; but it's still a courthouse town serving citizens who are very much living in 1961. It takes care of the business of modern Storey County and goes out of its way to provide creature comforts for its visitors. A wooden-sidewalked anachronism, Virginia City displays its past proudly in iron-shuttered doorways and in gloriously out-of-date buildings.

This month, just before the tourist season really begins, Virginia City is much more itself than in the crowded summer. You'll find it easy to get to—paved highways lead to it from Reno (22 miles) and from Carson City (17 miles), winding uphill through dramatic desert and mountain country. You'll also find places to stay—several of the motels (the Hilltop and the Sun Mountain Lodge, to name a couple) are quite modern, and the Silver Dollar

Hotel, an antique in itself in the center of town, is efficiently run by Florence Edwards. (Rates this time of year are usually gentler than in the busy summer season.)

There are shops galore, providing everything from ceramics and antiques to gasoline and groceries; there are restaurants purveying everything from hamburgers to champagne suppers. Many places offer books and pamphlets on Virginia City's marvelous history—and it's wise to get a few of these to read while you're on the scene to enhance your stay in a truly historic desert town.

Virginia City is so little changed from bonanza days that the big names of a past century, should their ghosts come back for a visit, would find themselves right at home. The mansions and business buildings, the very streets, would still be familiar to John Mackay, the silver king; to Ralston and Shearon, the financial moguls; to George Hearst, whose fortune created a publishing empire; to a man named Samuel Clemens who first used the pseudonym Mark Twain in Virginia City's *Territorial Enterprise*.

Many of the more remarkable of Virginia City's old buildings are open to the public, some with a small admission fee and guides. The *Enterprise* office, still doing lively business, is there for the looking. So is Piper's Opera House where most of the great dramatic and musical talent of a bygone age performed before gold-throw-

ing audiences. Lovely St. Mary's in the Mountains, whose slim steeple dominates the town, welcomes visitors, as do several of the original mansions.

The town cascades down the lower slopes of Mt. Davidson (Sun Mountain to the oldtimers), and everywhere in evidence are the immense conical dumps from the great mines—earth brought up from more than 2000 feet underground while the silver treasure of the Comstock Lode was being mined. Signs along the main street point to the greater of the mines—the Ophir, the C&C, the Hale & Norcross, and the Savage, to mention a few.

You can find your way in Virginia City easily. The town is laid out in a grid pattern, and in its heyday, the higher up the hill, the higher the social level. C Street is the commercial row and the main street, still with wooden sidewalks, false-fronted stores and a marvelous array of down-slanting gutterpipes that extend outward from second-story levels. Uphill one block on B Street are several fine homes, along with the Courthouse (built in 1876), Piper's, the Miners' Union Hall and the Water Company office. (Virginia City still gets its water from the far-off Sierra foothills through a siphon system that was a marvel of the 1870s.)

"A" Street, farthest uphill, was graced with the finest mansions, and the fine one at the corner of A and Union Sts., beautifully restored, is today author Lucius Beebe's home. Downhill, D Street held the less honorable commercial establishments, and long-gone Chinatown. Below D is the old Virginia & Truckee Railroad freight

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

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### TRUE-FALSE ANSWERS

Questions are on page 8

1. False. The Mormons arrived in Utah in 1847.
2. False. Ruth is a copper-producing center.
3. False. Jojoba is a desert plant.
4. False. Forsythe is an artist.
5. False. Tinajas is a Spanish word meaning natural water tanks.
6. False. The Butterfield Stage crossed the Colorado River at Yuma.
7. False. Great Salt Lake is the largest inland body of water west of the Rockies.
8. True.
9. False. A rattlesnake's fangs are in its upper jaw.
10. True.
11. False. The Bird Cage Theater is in Tombstone, Arizona.
12. True. 13. True.
14. False. The Papagos harvest saguaro fruit with long poles.
15. True. 16. True. 17. True. 18. True.
19. False. A metate was used for grinding meal.
20. False. Indio, California, is the U.S. "Date Capital."



A CURIOUS CROWD POUNDS THE WOODEN SIDEWALKS OF VIRGINIA CITY

station and the wreckage of the tunnel through which the trains rolled into town.

There are other tunnels (badly caved, but their framing intact) on still lower levels where lines of the railroad ran to big mines and mills. Follow the general line-up of the old right-of-way westward and you can find the site of the V&T roundhouse, its engine pits still traceable in the sagebrush.

From the mid-point of C Street, the view is downhill along Six Mile Canyon, dominated by Sugar Loaf's great rock. At the very bottom of town—isolated now—is big St. Mary's Hospital, built in 1875 to care for miners sickened or injured during their appalling labor underground. Many of these luckless workers of another day lie in the cemeteries just east of the lower edge of town, and the carved markers tell much of the sorrows of those hard early days.

Everywhere the old and the new are intermingled. Especially is this so in The Crystal on C Street, where affable Bill Marks dispenses a little of everything, including sodas and ice-cream cones to the daily horde of youngsters coming home from school. Bill's family has owned The Crystal a long time, and has wisely kept it much the way it was in the beginning. Bill is also a Storey County commissioner, whose interests thus encompass both old and new Virginia City doings. The Crystal has a number of delightful antiques, old photographs and ledgers as well as the ornate lighting fixture that gave the place its name long before electricity came to the Comstock.

Wherever you go in Virginia City, you're likely to run into oldtimers who know marvelous tales of the place—past and not-so-far past. They'll tell you for sure that the mines aren't really dead, and that there is still wealth to be had when the silver market goes up. Perhaps they'll mention some of the weird stories of "haunted" shafts and tunnels, or remember the incident not

long ago when Sheriff Will Cobb's rose garden disappeared overnight—swallowed by a tunnel cave-in far below street level. Virginia City is never without a good story, old or new. ///



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Ken Sleight, river guide  
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**I**T WAS July, 1954, and the hottest day on record at Southern Utah's Zion National Park. As the thermometer was climbing toward 116 degrees, a car with park service markings pulled up to the entrance station. A kindly, gray haired man spoke to the ranger on duty.

"It's a scorcher today George," he said.

"Sure is, superintendent," said the ranger, wiping the beads of perspiration from his forehead. "As a matter of fact, if it gets any hotter I'm going to have to take off this long-handled underwear I've been wearing all summer!"

During most of the year, the temperatures at Zion National Park range in the 70s or low 80s. The Park, which is a veritable oasis in the desert, annually attracts more than a half-million visitors.

Zion is the largest of the Utah parks, covering 76-square-miles in the southwestern corner of the state. It is paralleled by two north-south highways, U.S. 91 and U.S. 89, and is approached from the west or east by way of Utah Highway 15. It is approximately 300 miles from Salt Lake City and 500 miles from Los Angeles.

Because of its elevation (about 4000 feet) and protection of towering walls, the main canyon of Zion has a season extending from early April through the latter-part of November, although most visitors come during June, July, and August. The park itself operates year-round.

If you approach the Park from California and Nevada via U.S. 91, you will pass through the Mormon hamlet of Springdale. For the luxury traveler who can afford the best Utah has to offer, the best place to stay is the Driftwood Lodge, 1½ miles from the Park's south entrance. The Drift-

wood offers lodging, meals, and an atmosphere that will enhance any stay in the Zion Park area. Room rates vary from \$9 to \$16, and the restaurant features charcoal-broiled steaks, chicken, and trout dinners, and a mouth watering cheese pie made from the Driftwood's own recipe.

Another recommended Springdale stop is Arts and Crafts Southwest, an art shop operated by Joyce and Bill Munday. The shop carries the crafts of contemporary Indian artisans plus the work of three Utah artists whose paintings and ceramics have a Southwest motif.

When you finally reach the entrance station of Zion Park, you are greeted—always politely—by a ranger who will hand you a guide book, give you preliminary instruction on what to do and what not to do in the park, and exact the usual \$1 entrance fee.

Inside the Park, your first stop is the visitor center, a handsome building completed in 1959 at a cost of nearly \$1 million. This ultra-modern structure of rock, glass, and steel blends in with one of Zion's

Poem of the Month

### PETROGLYPHS

*Etched by a primitive hand that  
lasts through wind and rain,  
Through centuries of exposure to  
the elements,  
These pictures hold such simple  
truths  
on life and death and pain,  
With little or no embellishments.  
One wonders why, with substance  
great,  
We pitifully fail to duplicate  
By either art or written word  
Truths that can be half-endured  
As these, on slabs or rock and  
lime  
Which stood the acid test of time.*

By JAMES RHODES  
China Lake, Calif.

Desert Magazine pays \$5 each month for the poem chosen by the judges to appear in the magazine. To enter this contest simply mail your type-written poem (must be on a desert subject) to Poetry Contest, Desert Magazine, Palm Desert, Calif. Please include a stamped return envelope.

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most remarkable backdrops—the Temple of the Virgin, Altar of Sacrifice, and West Temple which rise 2000 feet above the canyon floor.

The visitor center entrance is a glassed-in rotunda, its roof supported by rust-colored steel beams which extend spiderlike from the building.

At the visitor center you receive your first indoctrination into the wonders of Zion. The naturalist directs you to the auditorium where at the push of a button the lights dim and a recorded voice takes you on a 10-minute tour of the Park. "Among the Park's most popular hikes," the voice continues, "are those to the Weeping Rock, Emerald Pool, and Zion Narrows." Here are to be found the geologic, scenic, and natural features that have made Zion Canyon world renown.

A picture of people hiking along a paved path lights the screen. This is the daily nature walk at the narrows held during the summer at 9:30 and 10:00 mornings, and 2:00, afternoons.

Pictures of the Park's magnificent scenery flash by on the screen: Angel's Landing, the Great Arch, Court of the Patriarchs, the Beehives, and, of course, the Great White Throne—a Zion Landmark.

The formation of the Zion Canyon area began about 13 million years ago when an uplift of the land mass created what is today the high plateaus of the Colorado River.

As the earth heaved and buckled in the natal pains of rebirth, great blocks of the earth's crust separated along fault lines. Some of these blocks rose vertically, others were thrust forward at an angle or had a



THE VIEW FROM THE ENTRANCE TO ZION'S VISITOR CENTER

tendency to dome. As a result of this uplift, once-meandering streams gained momentum; as they flowed faster and faster they collected sediment, sandpapering their way through the solid rock until the fantastic labyrinth that is now Zion Canyon was formed.

Geographically, the Zion Park area can be divided into two regions: the main canyon carved by the Virgin River, and the Kolob section which fronts U.S. Highway 91 near the Mormon village of New Harmony.

The Kolob section, otherwise known as the Kolob Terrace, is made up of a series of red buttes, promontories, and deep narrow canyons carved out by the waters of Taylor and LaVerkin Creeks.

From New Harmony, just off the main highway, the Finger Canyons of Taylor Creek are easily viewed. These canyons are so named because the red-hued promontories, separated by the three forks of the stream, jut skyward to resemble the knuckles of a clenched fist.

This semi-primitive section of the Park is accessible only by horseback or on foot. Under the Mission 66 program of the National Park Service, a spur road is to penetrate the heart of the Kolob area. From the end of this road, visitors will be able to walk to the Kolob Arch, a huge span 350-foot high.

But, the Kolob today is still for the adventuresome traveler; the rugged tourist who likes to backpack into the wilderness.

The most commonly-observed wild animal in the Park is the Rocky Mountain Mule Deer, although smaller numbers of wild cat, cougar, foxes, lizards and a half-dozen species of snakes, including the poisonous rattler, are sometimes seen.

Jim Felton, the big jovial chief ranger of Zion, tells the story of a routine patrol when he came across a group of men standing by the road in a circle, their attention riveted to the ground. All had sticks in their hands.

"I stopped the car, got out and walked up to them," said Felton, "and found they had a rattlesnake cornered." The perturbed reptile was coiled, its head raised, ready to strike, and its tail rattling furiously. "Say, ranger," one of the greenhorns asked, "which end of this snake is the worst?" ///

**APRIL 6 - MAY 15**

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**Desert Magazine Art Gallery  
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PROCTER**

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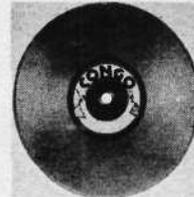
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the Desert*

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*The Gallery will be open from 9 to  
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the dates of Mr. Procter's show.*

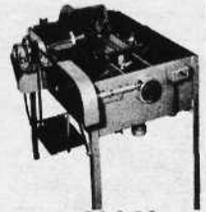
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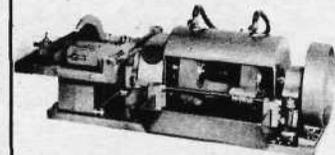


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# Eliseo Rodríguez

## Folk Artist of Santa Fe



RODRIGUEZ AND HIS PAINTING, "HARVEST THANKSGIVING AT SAN ILDEFONSO PUEBLO"

By W. Thetford LeViness

**A**RTIST, CRAFTSMAN, builder, and head of a large and growing family—such is Eliseo Rodríguez, an unusually versatile New Mexican of Spanish descent.

Eliseo was born in Santa Fe and has always lived there. The house he has constructed with only his wife's help, room by room through the years, is in a most attractive portion of the old city—atop a hill, with an unobstructed view of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains beyond. Eliseo and his family are devout Roman Catholics—a fact that has determined, for the most part, the course his art work has taken. Although he does a few landscapes and *genre* pieces in oil, Eliseo specializes in painting religious subjects.

Perhaps no other artist of the Spanish Southwest works with regional materials so well. His *Cristos*, *Virgins* and saints have been exhibited by the Museum of New Mexico in traveling shows that have gone to many parts of the country; leading art magazines have reproduced them in their pages. Today, there is a trend among discriminating tourists to acquire authentic mementos of their trips to New

Mexico; the indigenous work of Eliseo and a mere handful of others is increasingly sought out and bought.

There is a genuine folk-art quality to all this kind of painting, and especially is this true of Eliseo's religious work. He is almost completely self-taught. He took only a few art lessons as a young man, but showed a remarkable aptitude for color and design. Then he met Paula Gutierrez, of an old Rowe, New Mexico, family. He married her, acquired some land from his family, and started to build on it. Soon there were two rooms.

"The paintings were begun as decorations for the home," Eliseo says. "As each child came along, we needed to expand. I'd always do a religious painting for a new room. It was good church training for the children, and a source of satisfaction for Paula and me."

A big influence on Eliseo in these early years was Howard Kretz Coluzzi, an artist with a studio in the neighborhood. Coluzzi painted—and thought—in terms of the Italian Renaissance. A legendary figure, he was fabulously wealthy but preferred only the most modest of living comforts. He liked

to encourage budding artists, and he provided a sort of "primitive spark" to Eliseo's work. Coluzzi died in 1942, and was mourned by all in the Santa Fe art colony.

Eliseo served in the Army in World War II—Pacific Theatre of Operations. He stormed the beaches at Okinawa with the thousands of others, and when the Japanese surrendered he was as glad as any to get home. Upon his return he put much of his time and mustering-out pay into the house. There were several children by now—which meant that several rooms had to be added to the two he'd finished before the war.

From the first, Paula helped out with the building. Eliseo took a job with a Santa Fe craft shop, making furniture that was largely hand-carved. He made adobe bricks in his spare time, on weekends the year 'round and on long summer evenings after work. In the warm months, just before he was due home each day, Paula went out and watered the adobe that had been dug the day before. Eliseo mixed it with straw to give it texture, and poured it into molds that resembled great waffle-grills. Huge stacks of mud bricks thus manufactured dried in the sun for several weeks, and at last were ready for use. Eliseo and Paula patiently laid the 'dobes, brick by brick and layer by layer—it took hundreds of them for just one wall. Doors and windows came from Santa Fe lumber yards. *Vigas*—heavy logs used as roof supports in many New Mexican structures—were cut in high forests of the Sangre de Cristos.

"Pretty soon our house took shape," says Eliseo proudly. "It began to look like we'd always wanted it to look."

Today, it's the fulfillment of childhood dreams for both Eliseo and Paula. They're still working on it, and just last year added a small apartment for their oldest daughter, Yolanda, home from nurse's training and employed by a local hospital.

All the building is done in the manner traditional to generations of New Mexicans. As each room is finished, plaster is applied outside. When this dries it turns gray, so it's painted a mud color—to blend, more or less, with the landscape. This kind of architecture, "of the earth, earthy," is peculiarly adaptable to creative decoration.

Eliseo and Paula make numerous trips to Chihuahua, Mexico, and each time they go they bring back several hundred pieces of variegated tile. These are inserted around windows and doorways for color effect, inside as well as outside the house. Roses

and other flowers grow in the front and side yards, and during the past few years they've been successful with grass.

"Grass takes so much water in a dry country," says Eliseo. "We had to wait till recently for this, when we weren't using so much making adobes."

The interior of the Rodriguez home is traditional, too. In hilly terrain, it is built on several levels, with a step or more separating one from another. The *vigas*, which protrude on the outside, are exposed on the inside; the walls of the rooms are plastered and painted white. Some of the rooms have religious paintings by Eliseo, or a crucifix, or an image or two of a saint. Navajo rugs adorn the floors; Eliseo made much of the furniture himself. There are modern appliances—a gas cook-stove and heaters, a TV set and telephone; but living is centered around the family and the hearth. Each of the large rooms has its pueblo-style corner fireplace, and cold weather brings the pungent scent of burning pine and juniper sticks.

"The fire keeps us warm at night," Eliseo says, "and the smell of pinyon makes for good sleeping."

The house has always been for family friends too. Paula's *enchilada* and *posole* dinners are famous throughout the Santa Fe art colony. Eliseo and Paula speak both Spanish and English fluently, and discussion at their parties is often bilingual in character. "*Mi casa es su casa*," ("My house is your house") Eliseo has said over and over—to people of his own heritage, to Indians from New Mexico pueblos, and to "Anglos" of many backgrounds and beliefs.

Building the house, decorating and furnishing it, living and entertaining in it, and raising a large family have been a way of life for Eliseo and Paula. For them it was as natural to place emphasis on these matters as it was to join Cristo Rey parish when the church of that name was erected a few blocks from their property.

Of Eliseo's religious paintings, one *Cristo* is outstanding. Original in concept and technically superb, it is a "Christ crucified" against the backdrop of a Navajo blanket. Pueblo pottery and corn appear as offerings at the foot of the cross. Here, graphically told, is the early, familiar history of New Mexico—aspects of Christianity indigenous to the Southwest, and the Indians' acceptance of the faith of their conquerors. A reputable magazine of church art has ranked it a "masterpiece."

Other fine religious paintings by

Eliseo are "Santuario de Chimayo" and "Harvest Thanksgiving at San Ildefonso Pueblo"—both with a regional setting. He has done "Stations of the Cross"—14 separate panels—for the *morada* of the *Penitentes* at Cordova, New Mexico.

"Cabezon Peak" is a fine non-religious painting by Eliseo—a "desert-scape" based on a rocky knoll near Cuba, New Mexico. The *genre* pieces he has done include scenes in *cantinas* along the Rio Grande from northern New Mexico to Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua; his characters—jolly men, saucy girls—are remindful of England's Hogarth, or even of the early Flemish painters.

For the past several years Eliseo has done woodcarving for the Santa Fe Studios of Church Art. He makes columns and altar-pieces for religious structures in many parts of the country. He did all the interior woodcraft for a new chapel at Santa Barbara, California, and went there personally to install it. Among other churches he has decorated are St. Brendan's in Los Angeles and Our Lady of Fatima's in Albuquerque. The process is modern—power-saws and other machines are used—but the basic designs are in the New Mexico folk-art tradition.

Occasionally Eliseo teaches night classes in woodcarving at St. Michael's College in Santa Fe. It is not surprising that the designs he uses in this work are also Spanish-colonial. It would be "out of character" for Eliseo to use any other. ///

## Next Month In

# Desert

**IVANPAH MOUNTAINS.** 13 sites of interest to the mineral collector, amateur geologist or weekend desert explorer in the Ivanpahs on California's Mojave Desert. With map and detailed road information, illustrations.

**WIND.** The desert's "worst weather" gets careful attention. Drawings explain desert wind patterns, lee-side low pressure causes, the notorious Whitewater Jet, and even a machine for harnessing dust devils.

**ZUNIS GO EAST.** In 1882 a Zuni Indian delegation took the East by storm. The Indians broke-up minstrel shows, caused pandemonium in restaurants, and gave their approval to the old Salem practice of executing witches.

**BAJA BEACHCOMBING.** The famed writer, Erle Stanley Gardner, explores a virgin beach in Baja California—concluding chapter of his current Desert Magazine series (see page 10, this issue).

... and many more illustrated feature articles of interest to those interested in the great Desert Southwest.

All in the MAY issue of

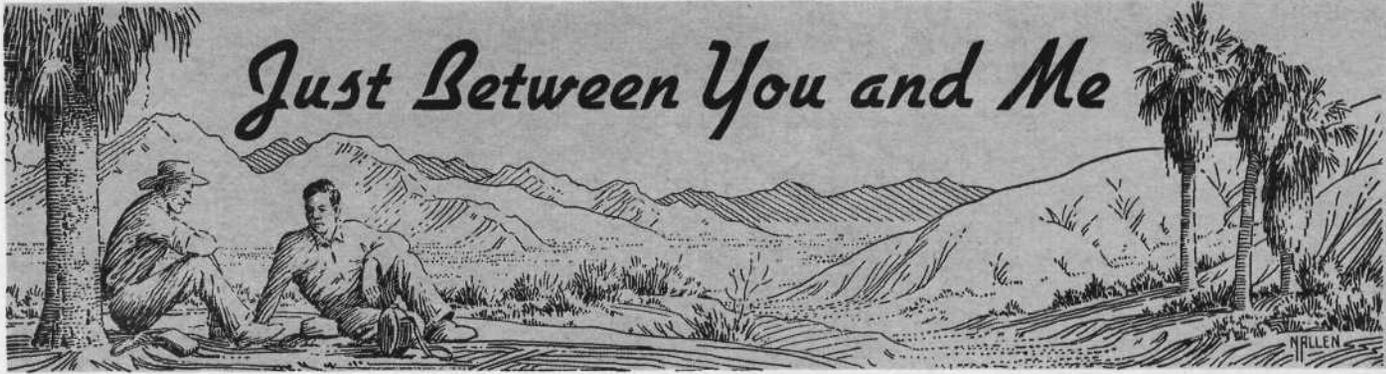
*Desert* magazine of the  
Outdoor Southwest



THE ARTIST'S "NEW MEXICO CRUCIFIX"



A CORNER OF THE RODRIGUEZ HOME



By RANDALL HENDERSON

**M**OST AMERICANS are land hungry. This is one of the by-products of inflation. Dollars may depreciate in value, but a homesite or an acre of land never shrinks. It is a tangible possession the owner can go out and inspect periodically with assurance it will still be there, undiminished in size.

Unfortunately for the small investor, however, land prices can be inflated or deflated drastically. During my 49 years on the desert in Southern California I have seen three cycles of boom and bust in desert real estate. Just now we are in a boom period, and speculators are making fortunes in the promotion of subdivisions.

In most instances they are legitimate promotions, backed by the integrity of ethical developers. But not all of them are in this category. I know two sizable townsite sales promotions in Southern California at the present time in which only a miracle can save the homesite buyers from disappointment and financial loss.

The first essential to a good investment in desert land is an adequate and dependable water supply. Without water, desert land is valueless. There are also other factors to consider: drainage, sewage, electricity, soil, sandstorms, accessibility—all these apart from the element of location with relation to highways and the character of adjacent use and improvement.

In California, the state assumes no responsibility in behalf of the buyer unless actual fraud is involved. In some counties, local ordinances do not give adequate protection to the investor. As a result, in some instances, land which the subdivider bought for \$100 an acre is being broken up—four or five lots to an acre—and sold at prices from \$2000 to \$5000 a site, without any guarantee that good water will ever flow from the faucets.

I have many acquaintances in the real estate business. The great majority of them are upright men. But there are exceptions. The safe rule is never to take a salesman's word for anything, unless you have personal knowledge of his integrity. In most instances the buyers of desert homesites come from areas where they take the water supply for granted. But on the desert it is different. This is a land where water may be totally lacking, where underground minerals make it unpotable, or where the cost of developing a private supply is prohibitive.

If you are buying a desert lot on which to build a home, or to re-sell to some other home-builder, take a long careful look at the water supply. If you are buying for investment, do not assume that the boom will last forever.

\* \* \*

There is increasing pressure on Uncle Sam from many sources to dispose of his public domain, many millions of acres of which are desert land. The Federal Bureau of Land Management, limited by antiquated homestead laws, has been

unable to cope with the situation, and there have been increasing reports of abuses which have been very costly to the public interest.

One of Stewart Udall's first acts following his appointment as Secretary of Interior, was to seek a solution to this problem. He declared an 18-month moratorium on all applications for public lands, to give the new administration time to formulate new legislation designed to end racketeering in the disposal of the public domain.

Southern California is fortunate in having in the federal Land Office in Los Angeles an administrator who is very sympathetic to the public interest. I refer to Nolan F. Keil, assistant state supervisor for the BLM in California.

Even before the new administration had taken over in Washington, Keil had taken steps to classify for potential public use as park, recreation, wildlife and watershed conservation, over 90,000 acres in the desert sector of Riverside county. His department has no authority to establish parks, but the classification of the land for these purposes will keep it off limits to private exploitation pending the decision of federal, state and county authorities as to its ultimate public use.

\* \* \*

For more than 15 years my friend Otis (Dock) Marston has been compiling data on the Colorado River and its navigation. He is writing a book on the subject, and no one is better qualified for the task, for he is one of the best boatmen ever to run the rapids of Grand Canyon.

Otis regards the current controversy over proposed protective works at Rainbow Bridge as more of less academic. "Where are they going to get the water to fill the Lake Powell reservoir behind Glen Canyon dam?" he asks.

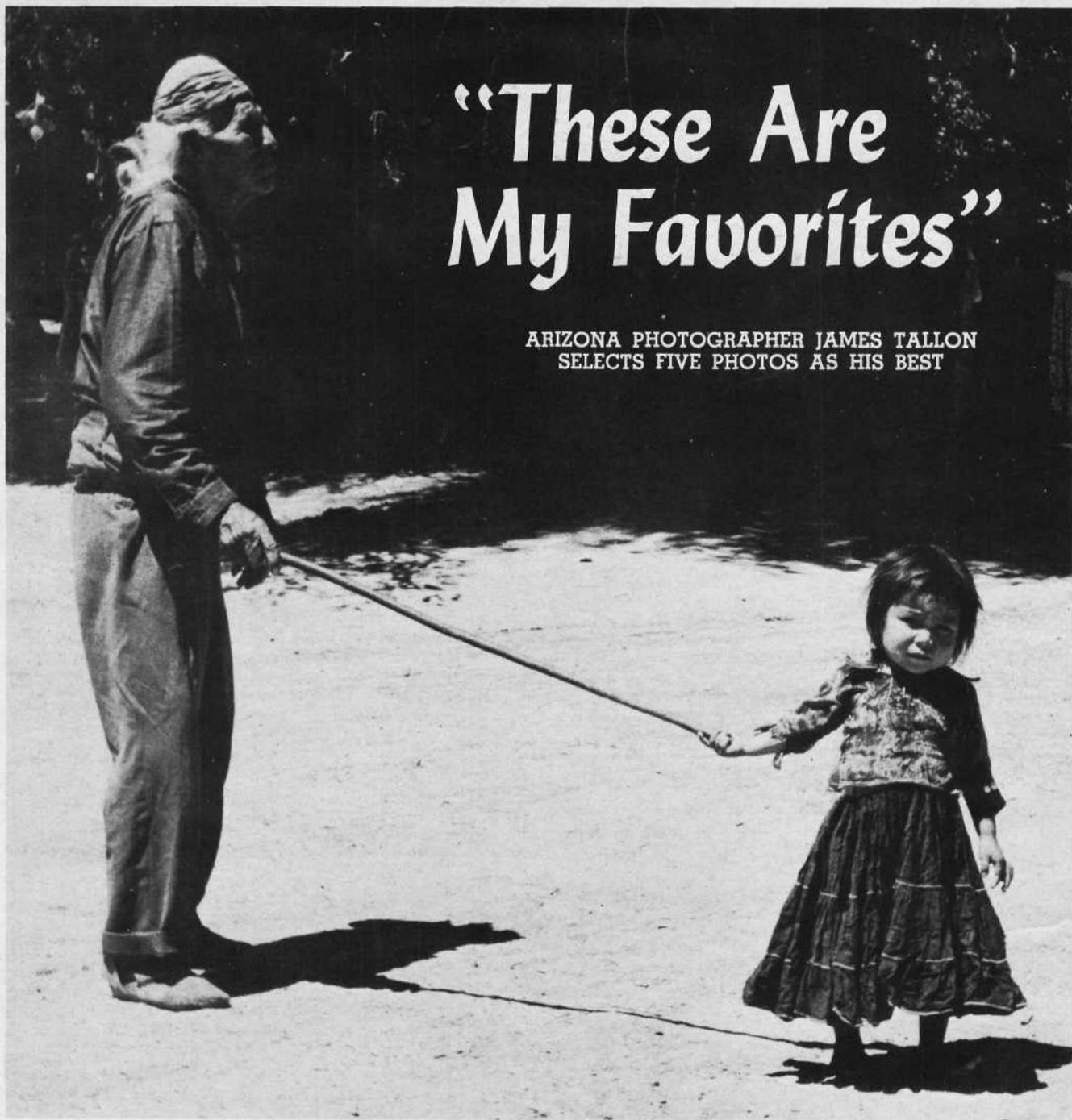
It is a pertinent question. Although Hoover dam and its Lake Mead are many miles downstream from Glen Canyon its power turbines are supplying electricity to millions of Americans, and its water irrigates over a million acres in the lower valleys. These users of power and water have a prior claim which must be recognized. Lake Powell can be filled only after these needs are met.

Actually, the answer is at the whim of the weather gods. This is a drouth year in the Southwest. It is doubtful if enough water will come down from the snowpack in the Rocky mountain watershed to meet the normal needs of the downstream users. The deficit must be withdrawn from Lake Mead.

If a dry cycle should continue indefinitely—as the tree-ring records indicate has happened in the past—Lake Powell reservoir may remain empty for many years. On the other hand, there is always the possibility that a wet cycle will solve the problem. How true it is that men propose, and the gods dispose.

# "These Are My Favorites"

ARIZONA PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES TALLON  
SELECTS FIVE PHOTOS AS HIS BEST



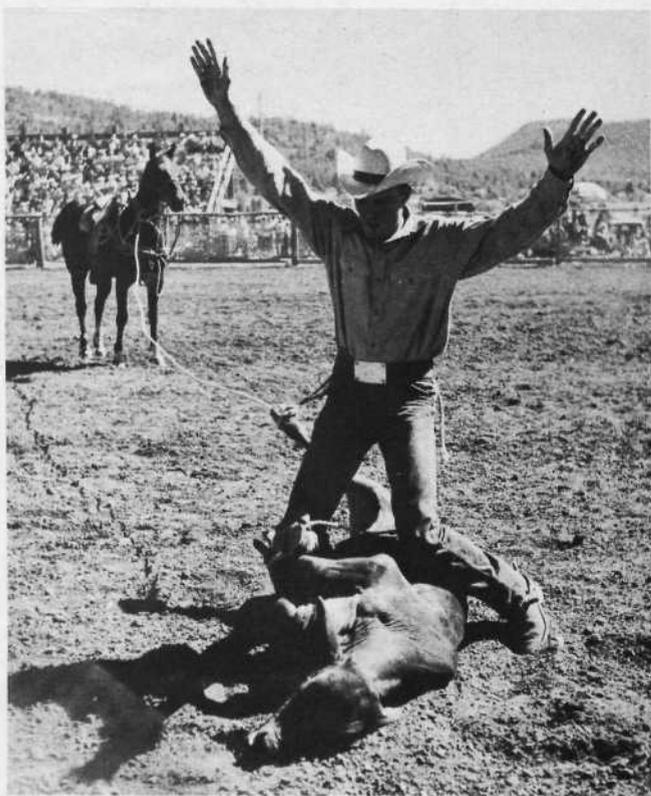
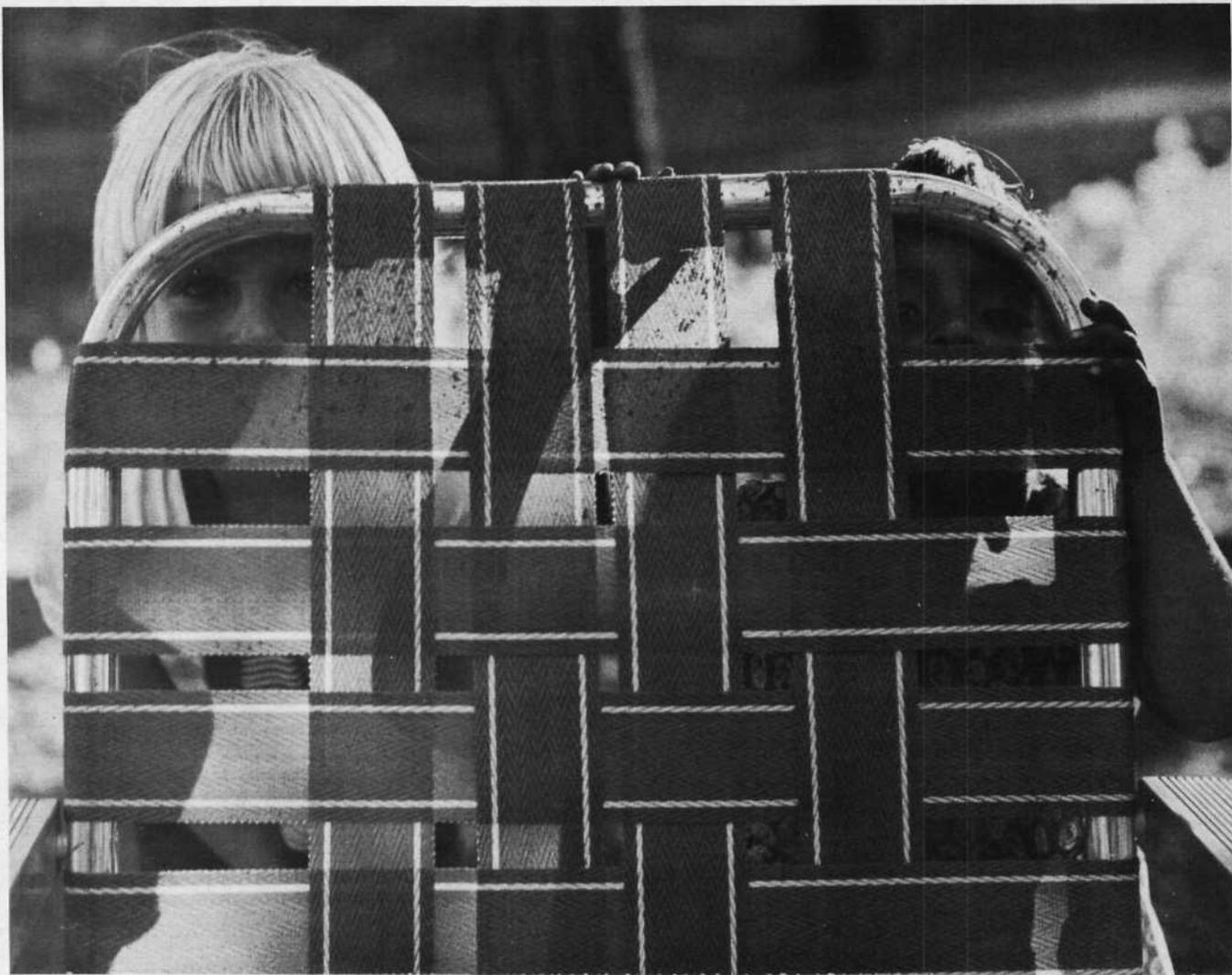
Leading an old blind Navajo, this child acts as his eyes and guides him wherever he wishes to go. There are many cases of blindness on the reservation, but few of those afflicted will submit to the white man's medicine for a possible cure.



James Tallon of Phoenix is just getting started as a photographer of the Desert Southwest. He has been at it only three years, but already his fine work is appearing in print with regularity. "Desert Magazine, Arizona Highways and Zane Grey actually picked the place for me to move to when I realized Kentucky, my birthplace, was becoming too crowded for a country boy like myself," writes Tallon. "The West fascinated me so much I had to record it some way—hence my entry into photography." Tallon works seasonally at Grand Canyon as a guide. He hopes photography, which now occupies him full-time in the winter, will be his only profession in the near future.

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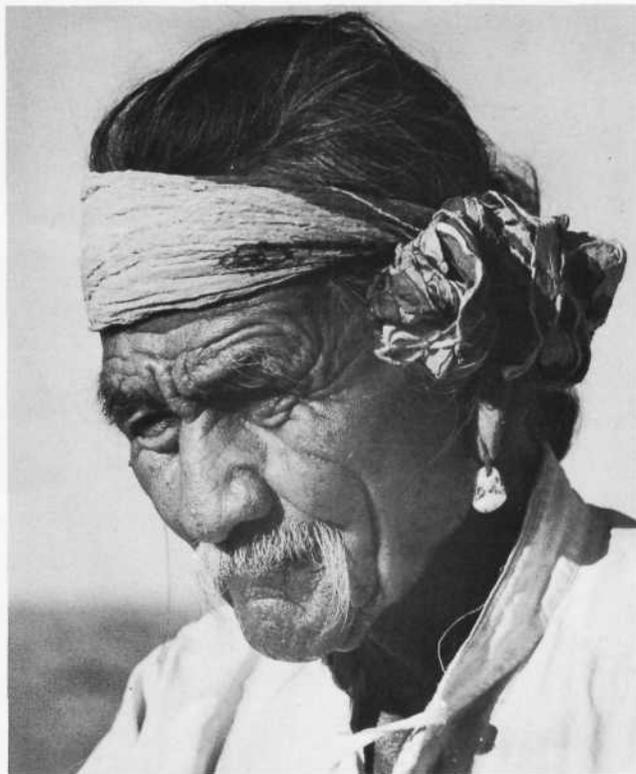
## James Tallon's Favorites



Most people who see this picture think that this is a posed shot. Actually I was following the little Hopi girl with my camera hoping to get something worthwhile. She shyly stepped behind the lawn chair and peeped through the corner. Just as I started to shoot, my own daughter (incidentally they are girl friends) peeped through the other side and what photographer could resist?

This is one of the few shots where I managed to think ahead at a rodeo. Still it was about fifty percent luck and one of many shots in the attempt. The action took place at the Williams, Arizona, rodeo.

Of all the pictures I have taken in the past three years—Number 8-9000—Ha-Da-Chaz-Zi is my favorite. This blind Navajo medicine man lives near Cameron, Arizona, and at one time, many years ago, watered his sheep at the foot of the Horse Thief Trail in the depths of the east-end of Grand Canyon. He is a very important Navajo, and whenever his people hold a sing in the Cameron area, he is called on to assist.



About twice a year I travel to the Grand Canyon floor by mule. On a trip last October, as I rode drag, a cloud came over the trail party to increase the already brilliant sunlight colors, giving a sort of ethereal quality to this photo.



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