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# Desert

THE MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

APRIL 1965

50c

**NEW CLUE  
PEGLEG'S  
GOLD**

*READER  
BONUS:*

**DESERT  
MYSTERY**

*by*

**ERLE  
STANLEY  
GARDNER**



**APRIL  
PHOTO  
CONTEST  
WINNERS**



**CHRISTIAN SYMBOL**

Mel Lewis

**Second Prize**

Salt Lake City, Utah

No one knows who or why this cross was placed in the hills north of the Escalante River in Southern Utah. DATA: Rollicflex, Kodak Super XX, light green filter, 1/100 at f22.

**WINTER IN FISH SLOUGH**

Adele Reed

Bishop, California

Author Adele Reed while searching for bottles in Inyo County, California, caught this unusual scene showing yet another aspect of the desert. DATA: Rolliemagic No. 2, Agfapan.

**First Prize**

**PHOTO CONTEST RULES**

1—Prints for monthly contests must be black and white, 5x7 or larger, printed on glossy paper.

2—Each photograph submitted should be fully labeled as to subject, time and place. Also technical data: camera, shutter speed, hour of day, etc.

3—PRINTS WILL BE RETURNED ONLY WHEN RETURN POSTAGE IS ENCLOSED.

4—All entries must be in the Desert Magazine office by the 20th of the contest month.

5—Contests are open to both amateur and professional photographers.

6—FIRST PRIZE will be \$15; SECOND PRIZE, 8. For non-winning pictures accepted for publication \$3 each will be paid. Although not part of the contest, Desert is also interested in viewing 4x5 color transparencies for possible front cover use. We pay \$25 per transparency.



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## Desert Events

**LATE MARCH.** Palomar Gem and Mineral Annual Show, Escondido, Calif., March 27-28. Baldwin Park Mineral and Lapidary Club's 5th Annual Show, March 27-28, Baldwin Park, Calif. Swiss Schwingfest, March 28, Holtville, Calif. Southwest Indian Pow Wow, March 27-28, Winterhaven, Calif.

**APRIL.** Salton Sea Corvina Derby, April through August, Salton Sea, Calif. Ute Indian Tribal Bear Dance, Early April, check with Roosevelt, Utah Chamber of Commerce for exact four-day dates. Santa Monica, Calif. Gemological Society Annual Show, April 3-4, Santa Monica Boys Club Bldg. Scottsdale, Ariz. Arts and Crafts Festival, April 12-16. Southern California Jumping Frog Contest, April 17-18, Del Mar Fairgrounds. 33rd Annual Spring Wildflower Festival, April 24-25, Hi Vista-Lancaster, Calif. Annual Riverside Community Flower Show, April 24-25, Riverside, Calif. Armory.

<b>JACK PEPPER, Publisher</b>		<b>CHORAL PEPPER, Editor</b>	
Elta Shively Executive Secretary	Al Merryman Staff Artist	Rose Holly Circulation Manager	Marvel Barrett Business Manager

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# New Books for Desert Readers

**LOG OF A TWENTIETH  
 CENTURY COWBOY**

By Daniel G. Moore

This cowboy's world is rich with history of the West's last stand. Since 1913 he has worked cattle ranches in New Mexico, Texas, South Dakota, Montana, and, since 1921, hired out to the "Wagon Rods" on the San Pedro River in southern Arizona. Here he tells about the great working ranches of the Southwest, what has become of them, and where the people are now who worked on them. He writes about cattle brands, Indians, hard times and good times, range wars, water holes, and trails of the past. He lived in log cabins, tents, bunk houses, wagons, and under the stars. His language is vivid when he tells of bronc stompers, big grullos, waddies—words that have meaning for cowboys.

Here is a smooth, easy-reading book full of excitement and color. If you care about Western Americana and want a book that's different and fresh, this is it. 217 pages, illustrated with drawings, hardcover. \$6.00.

Books reviewed may be ordered from the **DESERT Magazine Book Order Department, Palm Desert, California 92260**. Please include 25c for handling. California residents must add 4% sales tax. Enclose payment with order.

**GEM CUTTING SHOP HELPS**

Selected from the best of *Lapidary Journal*

Here is the finest collection of material ever assembled relative to gem cutting. Edited by gem expert Hugh Leiper, this 230-page paperback book is packed with practical information that starts with gem cutting for the beginner and progresses through sawing, grinding, sanding, polishing, diamond drilling, cabachon cutting, novelties, treatment of individual gemstones, and gemology. The book is explanatory enough to guide serious amateurs, but chapters it contains were prepared by professionals and has something to enlighten anyone interested in working with gems. \$3.95.

**JACK MITCHELL, CAVEMAN**

By Jack Mitchell

Dedicated to "Life, To those who are living It and loving It, to those who are seeking, and those who have found their purpose for being a part of It," this book, edited after his death by his wife and two daughters, is one of the truly fine autobiographies to come out of the desert.

Driven by financial mis-adventures into a state of depression bordering on suicide, Jack Mitchell's wife, Ida, ribbed him back to reality by pointing out that he couldn't very well "blow out" what wasn't there to begin with. With humor, love, and hard work, they moved to a tent on the desert and launched a new life. The famous caverns on their property provided a source of income, once Jack explored them, cleared trails to them, and himself constructed a road from Essex. Ida helped with the house they built of rock, with the additional guest cottages that came later, and cooked the meals that attracted a steady stream of tourists to their isolated holdings.

Here they pioneered for 20 years through cloudbursts, sandstorms, World War II, and poverty that makes you want to cry with admiration for their ingenuity and independence. The story relates Mitchell's excitement in discovering and exploring his famous caverns, one considered the deepest in the world.

A book to be enjoyed by all adventurers, cavers and desert dwellers, Jack Mitchell tells his story with simplicity and sincerity. Paperback, 164 pages, illustrated with photographs. \$2.50.

**HOME IS THE DESERT**

By Ann Woodin

Described on the cover as "a woman's life with four sons, a hundred animals and the brilliant desert of the American Southwest," Ann Woodin's first book is much more than this resume. Married to the director of the famous Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Tucson, Arizona, the author leads a fascinating—or terrifying, depending upon your own way of life—existence.

On the physical side she lives with

her collecting husband, four collecting sons, snakes, coyotes, bobcats, lizards, peccaries, tarantulas and an occasional alligator, all of whom seem to think they are part of the family and thus have a perfect right to make themselves comfortable in any room in the house.

With great wit and humor, which could only be developed through the years of coping with her unusual husband, Mrs. Woodin's anecdotes are hilarious, especially the one about Sammy, the pet coyote that Bill Woodin had to teach how to yap properly so the wild coyotes wouldn't ridicule him. The anecdotes are tied together with informative comments and facts on desert life.

But Mrs. Woodin has done more than present the physical side. She has captured the spirit of the desert in beautiful prose.

Profusely illustrated with excellent photographs and with an introduction by Joseph Wood Krutch, the 247-page hardcover book is \$5.95.

## NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SOUTHWEST

Edited by William Burns

Here is a book issued several years ago that is now available in paperback. Large format, 141 pages, and containing a number of superb full-color photographs, as well as excellent black and whites, it is such a fine desert reference book, and such a bargain, that we wish to bring it to the attention of DESERT readers. With material assembled and supervised by the famous Arizona-Sonora Museum, it covers the geology and scenic splendor of the Southwest, its trees, flowers, shrubs, reptiles, birds and mammals. Printed on the same heavy paper as the more expensive original, the only change is in the cover and price. This is a book you will refer to again and again and that will be of interest to schoolage children as well as adults. \$1.95.

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By Ricardo Castillo

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"Cuando joven de ilusiones, cuando viejo de recuerdos"

**When young, a man is full of dreams; when old, they are memories.**

"Cuando Dios da, da a manos llenas."

**When God gives, He gives a handful.**

"Cuchillito de palo, no corta pero incomoda."

**A wooden knife doesn't cut, but it bothers.**

"No se puede chiflar y beber agua."

**You can't whistle and drink water at the same time.**

"Caras vemos, corazones no sabemos."

**Faces we can judge, but hearts we cannot.**

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## Desert recommends these books about lost mines and treasure

**THE DESERT IS YOURS** by Erle Stanley Gardner. In his latest book on the desert areas of the West, the author again takes his reader with him as he uses every means of transportation to explore the wilderness areas and sift the facts and rumors about such famous legends as the Lost Arch, Lost Dutchman and Lost Dutch Oven mines. 256 pages, illustrated. Hardcover, \$7.50.

**LOST MINES AND HIDDEN TREASURES** by Leland Lovelace. Authoritative and exact accounts give locations and fascinating data about a lost lake of gold in California, buried Aztec ingot in Arizona, kegs of coins, and all sorts of exciting booty for treasure seekers. Hardcover, \$4.00.

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## Providence, U.S.A.

**I**N THE YEAR 1929 Jack Mitchell wandered into the Providence Mountains of Southern California in search of gold. He found no gold, only bats. But the bats flew out of caverns in the twilight and it was these caverns, explored and brought to public attention by Mitchell, that acquired the status of a State Park in 1959.

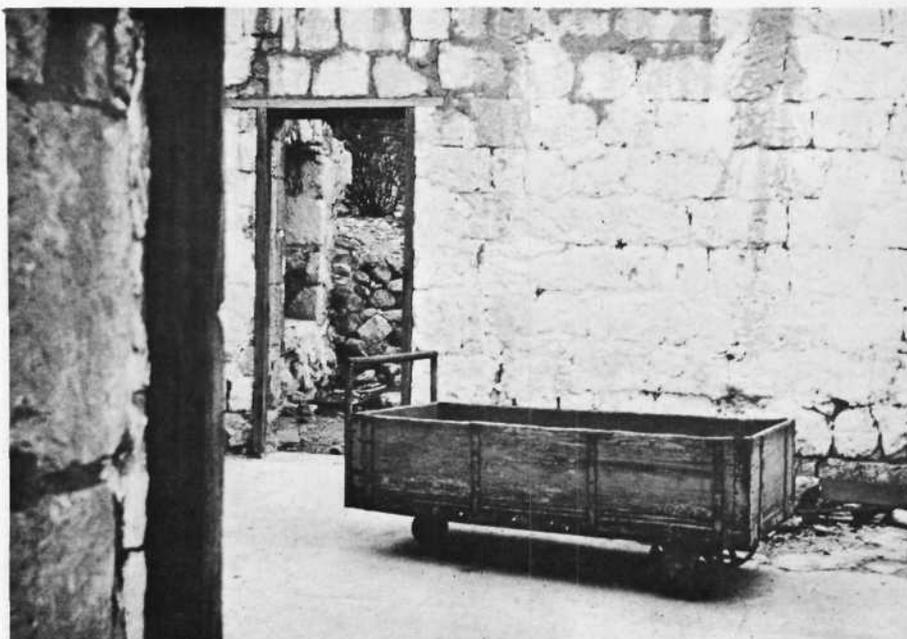
Intriguing stories of weird sights and adventure have been told of the Providence Mountains. We set out one recent weekend to discover for ourselves if they had any basis in fact.

Following U.S. Highway 66, we turned off onto the Mitchell Cavern road at Essex and continued up the side of one of the highest peaks in the range. At a paved picnic and camping ground we stopped for lunch and to enjoy the vast panoramic view. Looking east, it was possible to see the Black Mountains of Arizona, a range approximately 85 air miles from where we stood. North

was the table-topped Wild Horse Mesa, covered with its lovely cloth of red rhyolite. Directly below lay the mysterious Clipper and Fenner valleys where many prospectors perished in the days of a gold stamped.

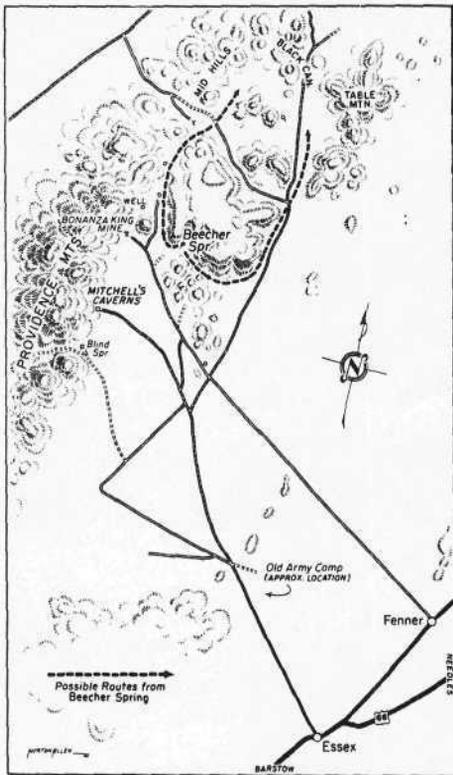
Park Headquarters now occupy the old home of Jack Mitchell and his wife. As a ranger led us along the trail to the caverns, we passed several cave entrances closed to the public. Not all of these join on the inside, we were told. Chemehuevi Indians once used them for storing pine nuts, but superstition prevented them from exploring the depths. That had to wait for the white man.

These caverns are not wired for electricity, so visitors are provided with flashlights—which adds to the excitement. As the air grew cool and our voices sounded strangely subterranean, our torches highlighted stalactites and stalagmites. It was a weird world, alright — just as we'd heard. Squeezing through narrow



*Ruins at Providence are worth exploring*

by Barbara Peterson



ore car. Broken pottery and china pave the grounds of rickety residences—some originally shipped from England to provide refinement to the rough camp.

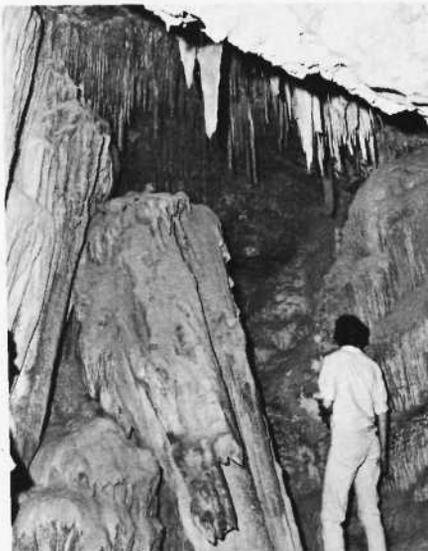
Above the townsite is the main shaft of the Bonanza King. Approximately 20 feet from the entrance the dirt had fallen away to reveal an unbelievable sight. At first glance it resembles a gigantic plumbing system. But this one was installed by Nature, not man. Its "pipes" appear to be of solid granite, but when we dropped stones through their network, ricochets continued almost interminably. Could this be an extension of some still unexplored cavern in the Providences?

Exploring a gorge west of town, we were rewarded with geodes and apache tears and desert flora presented treasures for the senses. Yes, everything we'd heard about the Providences was true — adventure, mystery, treasure and beauty. The only thing wrong with our trip was the time. It wasn't enough! ///

passages amid sculpture erected by Nature some 225 million years ago, we marveled at the courage displayed by Jack Mitchell in blazing this spooky trail.

In addition to the cavern open to the public, there is another called Cave of the Winding Stairs which experienced spelunkers may explore if proper preparations are made and permission obtained from park officials.

From the caverns, the rangers directed us to the ex-town of Providence, frequented today only by bottle hunters and ghost town chasers. At its peak, this community boasted of 3000 citizens, all supported by the great Bonanza King Mine. In its center stands the shambles of a large mercantile building, but the only display these days is an empty, well-used



Mitchell's Caverns are now in a State Park.



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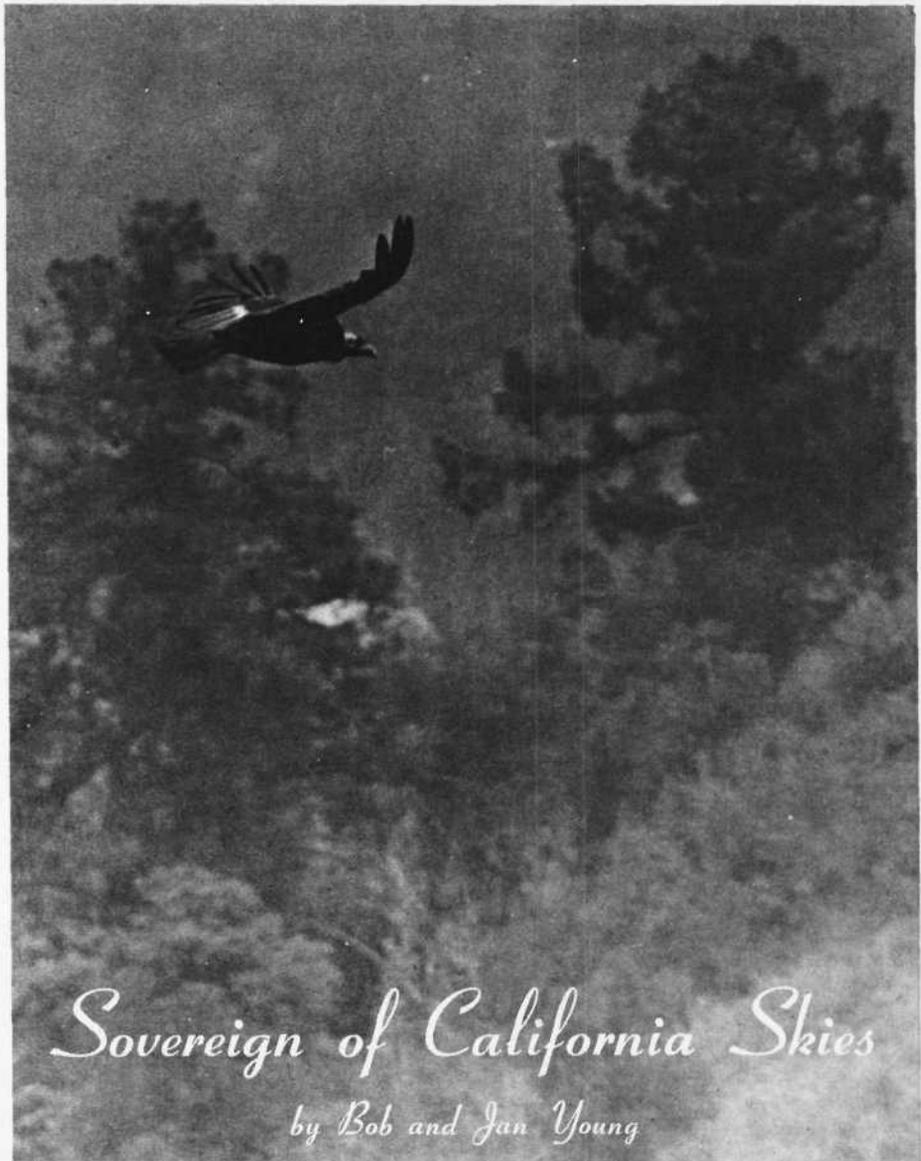
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## Sovereign of California Skies

by Bob and Jan Young

**A** LUDICROUS COMIC when earthbound, an unsurpassed monarch in the skies, this is but one of the paradoxes of the California Condor, that aloof, lonely, seldom-seen bird, fighting the most desperate battle for survival of any of America's vanishing species of wildlife.

A recent sighting of a flight of 11 young condors by fire-guard personnel has given hope that these gigantic birds, relics of a prehistoric past, may be winning their battle. How far the victory may go remains a question, depending largely upon how far man, the condor's sole natural enemy, is able to assist in the struggle.

Best estimates indicated that not more than 60 of these giant birds remain within their two remote, carefully guarded sanctuaries in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties in Southern California. Rarity is not the condor's sole claim to fame. Their size: weight up to 25 pounds, and a wingspread of 10 feet makes them the largest land bird on the North

American continent. Measured by wingspread, rather than body weight, they outclass their cousins, the heavier-bodied South American condors, as the largest flying birds in the world.

Despite its gigantic wingspread, the California Condor is not actually a flying bird. Rather, it relies upon an ability to shift the air currents which carry it aloft. A mature condor has been observed to soar for almost an hour, twisting and turning, raising and lowering, with only once or twice flapping its wings.

Observed at close hand, the condor takes no beauty crown. A close relative of the vulture, the adult bird possesses a naked, orangish-red head and neck, baleful red-rimmed eyes, dusty black plumage with white wing underlinings, and grotesque turkey-like feet. After gorging himself on a meal, his crop becomes so distended that a pouch of scarlet protrudes from the breast feathers. When running in awkward, pigeon-

toed strides, his wings flapping clumsily, he makes a ludicrous sight, but once airborne, soaring in the currents that are his birthright, he is unsurpassed for grace.

His ancestors existed in prehistoric times, as proven by the recovery of fossil remains from the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles—fossils aptly and picturesquely labeled "tera tornis incredibilis." But, after surviving the tests of centuries, man and civilization proved his nemesis. By 1849 and the California Gold Rush, the gargantuan birds still existed in numerous quantity, but it was discovered that their huge, hollow quills made fine receptacles for gold dust. For this, thousands were slaughtered, plus thousands more by trigger-happy miners. Compounding the slaughter, cowboys made a sport of roping the birds when they were so heavy from gorging themselves that they couldn't get into the air. Then, cattle and sheep men, ignorant of the fact condors were scavengers rather than predators, waged further war on them in the mistaken belief that they carried off young livestock. Extinction was almost complete by the turn of the century when collectors went forth to secure mounted specimens and eggs for museums. Finally, in 1913, laws were passed protecting the condor against hunter and collector alike.

These laws of protection were scant aid. Nature herself seems to have ill-equipped the condor for survival. Their normal diet is game which has died of natural causes. Gradually the condor was forced into remote, inaccessible regions where game, dying in overgrown chaparral, was inaccessible for them. Like our modern jets, condors require a long runway for take-off. Forty feet is often needed for their clumsy, flapping struggle to lift into the air. For this reason, they require a rocky, craggy habitat where food lies in the open; when they can step from high perches into the air currents that carry them aloft.

In addition, the condor's own monogamous mating habits have not helped. It is believed the birds do not mate until at least five years of age, and then usually for life. An adult pair produces but a single greenish-white egg every other year. This is laid in a dusty pothole, small cave or other natural declivity high in the rocks. The parents alternate in sitting on the egg for the 42-day incubation period and share in the feeding of the fledgling, which requires a minimum of at least seven months of parental attention to reach air-

borne maturity. Even then, the young bird's flying ability remains clumsy for some time.

Young condors, whose first wing quills are acquired three months after hatching, have a dark gray head and neck and lack the white wing linings of the adult. Gradually, over a five-year period, they take on the adult plumage and not until then do they reach mating age.

Within the last decade, realizing mere protection was not enough, wildlife and forestry officials and members of the Audubon Society worked together in securing the present sanctuary of some 35,000 rugged acres in the Los Padres National Forest of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties for the last stand of this vanishing bird.

Here in isolated crags they have their nesting and roosting area. Waterfalls and rain-fed potholes furnish their drinking water. Here they dip their curved beaks to take a sip, lift their heads to swallow, red eyes in constant, wary appraisal of their surroundings. Here they bathe, some content with merely wading into the deeper pools, others more energetic, shoveling water over their back with great dipping motions of their wings.

As ugly as the infant condor may be to human eyes, he must be unbelievably beautiful to his parents in view of the slavish hours devoted to his upbringing. In the adults there is no notable difference in the plumage of the male and female. In the mating season, the male performs a clumsy courtship dance, waddling and weaving from side to side, wings partially spread and head and neck arched coyly toward his breast.

Though the sanctuary provides adequate nesting, drinking and courtship areas, its 35,000 acres does not provide the necessary food. As a result, much of the condor's feeding is done within their 200-mile soaring range outside the sanctuary.

Cattlemen, once their foe, have become their staunchest friends and leave the carcasses of cattle lying in open areas adjacent to the sanctuary unmolested for the condors. These cattle carcasses comprise their principal source of food.

The recent sighting of the eleven young condors gives hope that the flock is increasing. It had generally been believed that only some five or six young were being produced a year, about equal to the number of adult birds that die. But if the condors are on the increase, will a larger

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# DESERT HOLDS SECRET OF HEALTHY HEART by I. Aizic Sechter

**"IF YOU WANT** a good heart, go to the desert!" That's a conclusion reached by several Israeli doctors. "And if you can't go to the desert," they advise, "at least heed the diet of desert dwellers."

A group of Israeli scientists have been studying the life and diets of a tribe of semi-nomadic desert dwellers, the Bedouins. Only one case of coronary thrombosis was found among 510 Bedouin men 30 years and older. This finding confirms the clinical impression of doctors who practice among the Bedouins, that coronary heart disease is conspicuously rare among Israeli Bedouins.

The examination of the nutrition of the Bedouins was conducted by Professor Joannes Juda Groen and Professor Fritz Dreyfuss of the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center, with the cooperation of biochemist, Dr. E. Yaron and Dieticians Mr. Miriam Balough and Mina Levy. Results revealed that the blood cholesterol of the Bedouins falls considerably below that considered normal in modern Western populations.

There wasn't even a significant increase in the blood cholesterol of men over the age of 30. It seems, therefore, that blood cholesterol doesn't increase automatically with aging, but is probably related to dietary habits.

These semi-nomadic tribes rely on good rain years to provide them with their main staple of grains, mostly barley, which they store in anticipation of drought; they also graze sheep, goats, camels and some cows on sparse desert plants. They number about 18,000 and live in Israel's southern Negev desert.

The Bedouins don't know what cooking means. Like those of American Indians, their kitchen utensils are simple, primitive, and easily transported when camps are moved. Their food is monotonous; even holiday dishes rarely vary. A type of unleavened bread that looks and tastes like crackers is called "rarif" and is the main food of Bedouin tribes, no matter how rich or poor.

The second portion of their diet is liquid—a sour milk they call "afik."

It is milk which has been obtained from sheep, goats, camels and occasionally asses. The milk of camels is considered most nutritious of all. By allowing the milk to sour, they are doing a good thing biologically, as typhoid and other harmful bacilli cannot survive in sour milk. Fat is removed to make "samneh," a kind of sour butter which is either drunk or boiled with salt to make hard cheese.

This diet may not sound attractive to the average American, especially when accompanied by the following "don'ts" which the Bedouins observe. They don't drink alcohol, except for an occasional beer. They eat meat only when entertaining guests. Then they display a prodigious hospitality by slaughtering a sheep or lamb and consuming the entire animal at one meal. On an average, meat is eaten about once a month. Most families eat chicken more often. They hardly touch vegetables, fruit and eggs and many have never seen a fish.

All this adds up to the fact that the Bedouins of both sexes have low body weights and thin layers of subcutaneous fat. This is a great advantage in bearing the heat of the desert, as heat is dissipated more easily by thin people.

So, if you really want to "live" in the desert, you'd better learn to eat like a nomad. You won't have to vary the menu or worry about washing dishes. Your only problem will be in finding a camel to milk! ///



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# GOLD NUGGETS MADE TO ORDER

BY SAM HICKS



Above: David Hurtado examines nugget purchased from novelty store. Below: He's surprised to find it plated with real gold.

THROUGHOUT THE Sierra Madre of Mexico gold is used daily in business transactions. Chinipas, Trigo Moreno, Moris, Santa Maria, Pilar and La Cienega are names of but a few of the active hard rock mines scattered along the eroded western slope of the Mother Mountains. In Pilar and La Cienega there is still more gold used in trade today than there is money.

Prospectors are still panning and sluicing gold in the main Mulatos River, and they are slowly extracting tiny quantities of it from tributaries of the Rios Yaqui and Mayo. Jobs are as scarce in this mountain region as gold is precious, and when beans and tortillas are few, versatile Mexican workers head for the hills and streams with picks and shovels and their gold pans—usually large, misshapen wooden bowls called *bateas*.

An offshoot of the prevalent upsurge in Mexico's general economy is the desire of tourists, chiefly Mexican but some are American, to purchase raw gold from prospectors fresh in from the mountains and display evidence of their success in the form of shiny nuggets. The tourists, upon their return to the cities, then have their gold fashioned into specialty items such as charms for bracelets.

The increasing demand and local bartering for gold in Mexico has raised the price of it considerably and has resulted in the practice, by certain prospectors and gold dealers, of making a little gold go a long way. None of the methods presently used in Mexico for selling gold-plated rocks or coated chunks of bronze and lead are either new or different. They are noticed mostly because gold is

still a medium of exchange in these parts and, although it is by no means plentiful, the widespread knowledge of its existence tends to attract uneducated buyers. So, with these thoughts in mind, some prospectors have elected to use deception in order to increase the pitiful volume of gold dust for which they have worked so hard.

When the sand and gravel has been separated from the values and expertly sluiced over the edge of the bowl, the placer miner cuts tiny slices of lead from the nose of a bullet into the wisp of gold remaining in the pan. He next removes the gold and lead from the pan with quicksilver, and after several similar operations, squeezes the mineral-laden mercury through a tough cotton rag. The quicksilver retrieved in the wringing-out process is returned to the miner's flask, but the twisting, squeezing and tapping of the amalgam continues long after the last shiny bead of quicksilver has emerged from the taut fabric. Finally, when the amalgam cannot be further concentrated through pressure alone, the rag is tied off to prevent it from untwisting and the bundle is placed in the hot coals of an open fire. As the rag burns from the button, the amalgam can be seen to glow a cherry red. By this time the lead and gold are fused sufficiently well that the lead cannot be detected by sight.

Hardrock miners who separate their gold through primitive milling processes such as *arrastras*, are also now inclined to spread the net value of their product over as large an area as they deem expedient before marketing it. These men rarely have the necessary facilities needed for



A button of real placer gold panned from the Mulatas River of Sonora.



Imitation, gold plated coarse rocks may also be purchased.



gold-plating at their mines. So, after collecting a few pure gold buttons, they set out for the nearest friendly goldsmith who would just as soon do custom work for miners as he would for tourists.

The miner shows the craftsman his gold, then places an order for the number of nuggets he wishes. The customer specifies whether the base should be rock, bronze or lead and also determines whether his nuggets should be "solid gold" or decorated artistically with a few fragments of white quartz. In the goldsmith's shop there is a variety of choices open to the miner with regard to the shape and size of the nuggets he desires. Expediency must be used in determining the thickness of the pure gold plating to be applied to the rocks or base metals used for the cores.

Rough rocks, when properly plated, make the prettiest nuggets of all but the problem of insufficient weight is always present and they are sometimes hard to sell. Lead and bronze therefore are more popular with nugget makers.

A prior knowledge of the prospective buyer is an important factor when ordering custom made nuggets. On the scratch test will the tourist cut deep enough to expose the rock? Or will he be happy with a perfunctory acid test which cannot penetrate an expert job of plating.

David Hurtado of Yecora, Sonora, Mexico, has been closely associated with mining people in the Sierra Madre all his life. He and his father were ranchers, but they specialized

for many years in moving heavy mining and milling equipment with a string a pack mules into rough country.

On one of the Hurtado's contracts, David and his father carried 16 tons of mining cars, rails, heavy flywheels and axles and journals a distance of 90 miles to the La Moneda mine. On each of their return trips from the mountains to the railroad, each mule in their string carried 300 pounds of ore. As a result of David growing up and working with mining men most of his life, he developed an uncanny ability to accurately judge the value of most ore at a glance. At one time David lived with the Pima Indians who placer mine the Yecora and Mulatos Rivers for the only income they ever know other than receiving a few staple foods in exchange for the hats they weave during certain seasons of the year. In short, David knows mining in Mexico and all the tricks that have yet been devised to sell gold for more than it is worth.

According to him, the village storekeepers who daily exchange goods for gold, and the professional dealers, now follow a strict set of rules in buying chunk gold.

Whenever nuggets or amalgam buttons are spread before them, they quickly cut every one in half with a heavy belt knife. Frequently it's necessary to use a hammer to tap the blade through the pieces of gold, but in every instance the nuggets, or buttons, are split in two. The gold is then placed in a glass container of nitric acid and the seller waits, some-

times nervously, while the buyer observes signs of corrosive action, if any, on the gold. If the gold is good, the few impurities exposed by cutting it are rapidly consumed and the strings of tiny bubbles stop rising to the surface. If it has been tampered with, or loaded, the buyer invites the seller to either stick around until the acid stops bubbling or come back the following day when a deal for the remaining gold can be made.

In the gold trade of the Sierra Madre the thin shells of plating which remain, after nitric acid has eaten away the worthless center cores, occur so regularly that they are dubbed by dealers as "peanut shells." No one becomes angry when a collection of beautiful nuggets are transformed into "peanut shells" during a business deal. Instead, the parties involved shrug their shoulders, drink a cerveza and laughingly remark that selling gold is a lot like being in love, or at being at war.

Beautiful nuggets of all sizes, pitted and rough with white quartz deeply imbedded in them can now be bought in probably several places throughout California. Woodworth's Rock Shop of 975 Buschmann Road, Paradise, California, or, Goldene Products, Drawers "O", Sun City, California, are two places where I personally know they can be obtained. I'm sure there are more.

These nuggets are excitingly heavy, rich in color — and completely phoney. The people who sell them to you in a business establishment are the first to tell you so. You can buy them either for the purpose of making striking jewelry, or as a joke with which to fool your friends. In either event they are a good investment as a lot of enjoyment can be had from them.

A big nugget the size of the end joint of your thumb will cost you about \$2. They are plated with real gold and pass the scratch test with colors flying while they are new. It's not advisable to carry them in your pocket, though, as the gold soon wears off and the color changes first to a sickly yellow, then gradually turns green.

So, if in the future you are approached by a fast-talking stranger dressed in rough western garb who tries to sell you genuine gold nuggets at bargain prices, or shows you a piece of picture rock and attempts to sell you an interest in a gold mine, shrug your shoulders and laugh with him. Don't laugh at him, because, after all, anything is fair in love or war — or in selling gold. ///

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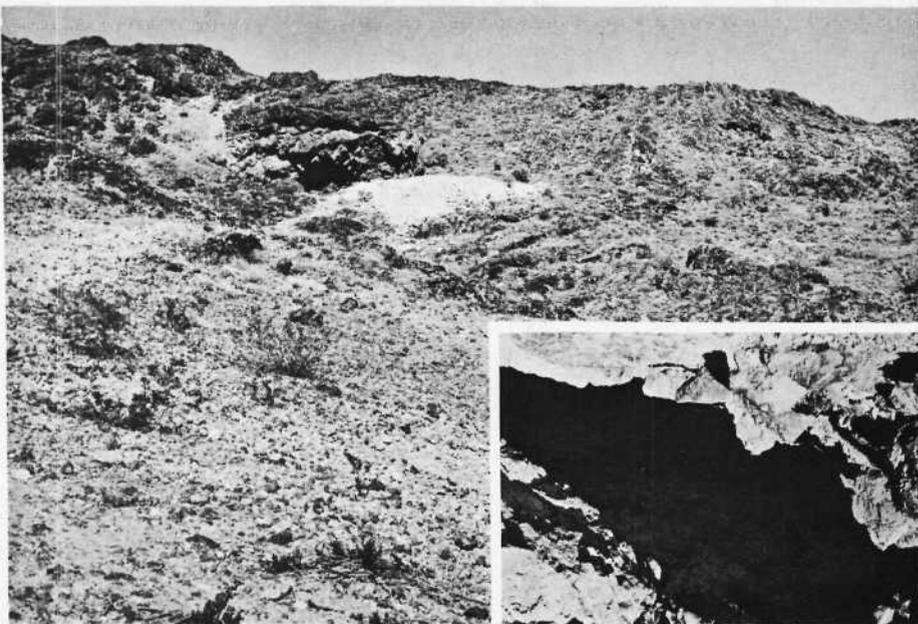
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## GYPSUM CAVE OF NEVADA

by Ray Warner

**G**YPSUM CAVE, Nevada, at one time accessible only by horseback, 4-wheel drive vehicles, or a vigorous hike, may now be reached by pleasure car over new Lake Mead Boulevard. This previously remote area is located 16 miles east of North Las Vegas, while the cavern itself is located in a limestone spur of the Frenchman Mountains near the head of the east branch of Las Vegas Wash.

Driving east on Lake Mead Boulevard for approximately 12 miles, a wooden-pole, power line will become visible heading to the north. Turn left on the road adjacent to the power line road. This unpaved, but well traveled, road parallels the power line. Traveling two and one-half miles to the north will bring you within several hundred yards of the cave's portal. Tailings from excavations are clearly visible. Several distinct trails and possible roads lead from here to the mouth of Gypsum Cave, 160 feet above the nearby lowlands. Two miles southeast lies the boundary of the Lake Mead Recreational Area and Lake Mead itself can be seen approximately 10 miles away in the same direction.

Gypsum Cave measures 300 feet in length and at one point, 120 feet in width. The entrance to the cave faces toward the southwest and measures 70 feet across and 15 feet high. Most of the cave's floor lies below the level of the portal, the only exception being the room to the left. Past the cave's entrance the floor begins to slant downward quite steeply, descending 34 feet in a distance of 52

feet. Moreover, the slanting floor is a rough one, a mass of loose rock which has fallen from the roof at various times. The same rugged formation prevails to some extent through all parts of the cave. The roof is shattered and in some areas, crumbling to such a degree that extreme caution is necessary. Down the rocky slope is a small level area from which the dark, inner chambers may be reached through small entrances, very low, between the rocks.

Apparently Gypsum Cave was known long ago to the local Paiute Indians and to the white residents of Las Vegas and vicinity. The Indians considered the cave a sacred place and their medicine men from time to time deposited offerings in it. In 1930, the Southwest Museum excavated Gypsum Cave, uncovering artifacts used by ancient people. Puebloan pottery, atlatl darts, and gaming sticks with ground sloth dung and hair testified to the antiquity of the cave and its inhabitants as well. Moreover, rocks about the main opening had been highly polished, quite probably by the fur of passing animals and hands and feet of human visitors.

The Gypsum Cave excavations created a good deal of interest in anthropological and archaeological circles because they indicated man inhabited this region at the time of the extinct ground sloth. Although highly publicized in the past, Gypsum Cave has been seldom visited and never developed for the public. Due caution should be observed when further exploration attempts are made by amateur spelunkers and, needless to say, nothing should be disturbed. //

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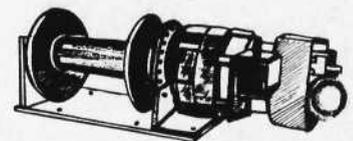
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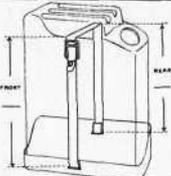
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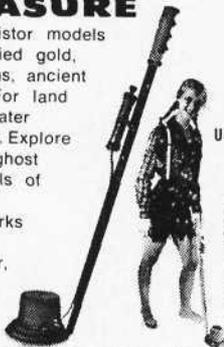
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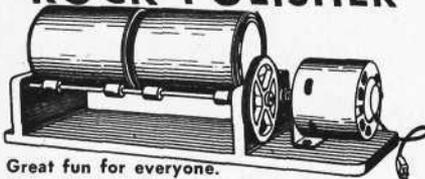
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**WHAT IS SCHNAPPS? by Adele Reed**



**A**LMOST WITHOUT exception, viewers of our collection of old aromatic Schnapps bottles, exclaim, "Wouldn't I love to taste that! Bet it was better beer than we have now!" As we were not certain about the contents of these beautiful bottles, I wrote directly to the company in Rotterdam to request labels. Here is the reply:

*Dear Madam:*

*We duly received your letter and complying with your request we herewith enclose a number of our labels. For your information we may still say that the small ones are all bottle labels. The big one, however is a box label which is used on the cardboard boxes in which each bottle of Schnapps is often packed. Trusting that this information will be of use to you, we remain, yours faithfully,*

*N. V. Handelsvereeniging,  
Udolpho Wolfe Company*

One interesting label read, "Wolfe's Schiedam Aromatic Schnapps, a superlative tonic, diuretic, antidysepetic, and invigorating cordial. Its ex-

traordinary medicinal efficacy in gravel, gout, chronic rheumatism, dropsy, flatulence, colic, etc. Acknowledged by the whole medical faculty and attested in their highest written authorities. Udolpho Wolfe."

Our bottles have wide, crudely applied collars, indent bases, large bubbles, and all are square with beveled corners and rather heavy embossing. In the accompanying picture the first three are Udolpho Wolfe and the two on the right are Kiderlen's, all originating in Rotterdam. Nos. 1, 4 and 5 were found in the sand at Key West, Florida, (horsetraded for) and are a lovely soft, sanded and etched green, very similar to our desert sanded bottles. No. 2 is highly opalized amber and No. 3, in center, is a pretty shade of golden, olive amber, both having been dug up in Western ghost towns.

Definitely placed by the foregoing information and also dated, as the company was established in 1848, these bottles are a handsome addition to any collection. ///

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According to this mining engineer, black gold nuggets hide among desert varnished rocks beside ancient springs in a number of locations across the Colorado desert. Here is a novel and interesting solution to the mystery of Pegleg's widespread black gold, submitted before last month's Pegleg discovery was released.

# NEW CLUE TO PEGLEG'S GOLD

by John Southworth

AS A MINING engineer, I had always held a cavalier attitude toward the Lost Pegleg gold saga, in all its variations and locales. But that was before! Now, having tracked down *the* story, I'm a believer. We're going to have to hurry, though, if we want to track down any of that elusive black gold. It's disappearing rapidly, and I will tell you why.

But first, a bit of background. Old Pegleg Smith was a desert character well-known throughout the West for the fantastic tales he told and the life he led. With his obvious physical hallmark, he was recognized from Salt Lake City to Yuma and San Diego. Even before he died, and for many years afterward, individuals with a missing leg cashed in on his notoriety by calling themselves Smith, whether they were or not. And so the deeds of his imitations, of which there were a surprising number, have become so confused with those of the original that it's difficult to separate myth from fact.

The real Thomas L. Smith was born in Kentucky in 1801 and died in California in 1866. Somewhere in between he lost a foot, found



*These Indian ceremonial rock rings are not from the Chocolate Mountains, but may mark another area where Pegleg's black gold could be found.*

gold nuggets heavily stained with desert varnish, and left us a legacy that has been hard to collect. In fact, with so many Pegleg Smiths at large in the Southwest prior to 1900, the general location of the Lost Pegleg is subject to severe argument. Some have claimed its true location as far away as Alaska! But there was gold, and it was black, and wherever it came from, it was Pegleg Gold. For thus it is written in the legends of the West.

I wasn't much interested in all this controversy until an unpublished story came to my attention. It was so fresh, simple, and direct that I could no longer ignore the Black Gold of the Colorado Desert.

Shortly after the completion of the railroad through Yuma to Los Angeles, a Southern Pacific man was directed by his office in San Bernardino to visit the railroad holdings to the east of the main line. His course led him from Glamis north into the Chocolate Mountains via Mammoth Wash and back into the Salton Sink via what is now called Salvation Pass. When Mammoth Wash narrowed down, he climbed out on a game trail to the left and as he traveled along this trail looking for rocks to

support his coffee pot for a midday break, he spotted an area of small black pebbles. These interested him because of their extreme weight so, before continuing his journey, he gathered a bandana full. Later, in San Bernardino, he left the rocks with an assayer who eventually purchased them all for \$1400, which the railroad man considered adequate compensation for his trouble. Later he was transferred to Arizona, where he died.

A well-organized party of searchers, including a nephew of the railroad man, spent three months in Mammoth Wash in a fruitless search for the black pebbles. Later a Mr. Earl Newcomb heard the story from the nephew and personally checked on the \$1400 gold sale to the San Bernardino assayer. Finding it true, he took up the search in the company of a Mr. Don Gierens of Glendale, California. Several jeep trips netted them nothing but experience. The story came to me from Mr. Gierens, whom I met through the Lockheed Employees Mining and Prospecting Club.

At this point, I entered the story myself. Realizing that in intervening years, especially during the De-

pression '30s, War Training '40s, and the Jackrabbit Homestead '50s, thousands of people must have covered the area by every means of transportation, I didn't expect to find enough black pebbles to bring big money, but I did want to find out how they got there in the first place. To accomplish this, I entered the area from the south, leaving the railroad in early morning, walking, and mentally putting myself in the shoes of the railroad investigator.

Now that investigator, like myself, had probably never been there before and was probably as surprised as I to find that, for all its magnificent name, Mammoth Wash soon necked into a narrow arroyo between a butte and the main Chocolate Mountains, with no indication of continuity to the north or east. What would a stranger do if he were expected to cross these formidable mountains.

Ahead I noticed a distinct lowering of the butte to the left and, expecting that my long-gone guide of some 65 years before had had the same problem, I determined to climb out at the first opportunity, the better to see what troubles lay beyond. After a short climb, a view to the east assured me that the wash continued and was large and easy to traverse—but it also revealed something else. In an adjacent gully, a trail climbed like a painted streak up an eroded wrinkle and onto a smooth alluvial fan which the main wash had abandoned for a lower channel.

Now this was more like it! Pegleg's story matched the terrain so I wasted no time in getting to the top of that mesa. The trail, which had been described as one made by animals, was actually a well-defined Indian trail worn into desert-varnished paving. With my eyes to the ground, I walked for nearly a mile, paralleling the main channel of Mammoth Wash which was on my right, until the trail disappeared up a long ridge going north, while Mammoth Wash went east.

This was the place, all right, but there were no heavy black pebbles. This area, as is probably true of other Pegleg gold locations, had been cleaned out by persons who had no reason to report their find officially. I found no gold, but saw many things significant to a mining engineer. Most important, the trail crossed an alluvial fan of impressive proportions where it would be physically impossible for surface gold to occur naturally. But the gold had been there. Someone had spent a lot of time digging little pits, and had even

tried to "blossom" some of the rocks in the manner of Cripple Creek prospectors on the trail of gold tellurides.

A few feet to the side of the trail, standing 10 feet above the fan and exposed all the way to the bottom of the bluff, was a pipe, or "blowout," of dark igneous rock, perhaps olivine and hornblende—a complete stranger in the brown varnished rocks. But the pits were not near this, as would be logical. Instead, they were out on the flat amid a series of ancient Indian prayer rings—large rocks placed in circles. Jeep tracks were everywhere, especially around Hayden Well, the modern location of an ancient water source.

After returning home, I dug up every issue of DESERT Magazine back to its very beginning. Most of the Pegleg gold stories suggested a fabulous deposit with rich float showing on the surface. This seems to have developed from the fact that each "authentic" story included one or more black buttes or volcanic cones. And, didn't gold and volcanic activity go hand in hand? So here grew up a popular false clue! Only occasionally did I read that a Pegleg search was being abandoned or shifted to another area "because gold just didn't occur on the surface in such terrain." So near the truth, but not near enough!

Let's look at a typical story about

Pegleg gold. The main ingredients are, besides the black gold itself, a tinaja filled with good water and two volcanic cones. Now this takes us back, full circle, to Hayden Well, where I found good water, evidence of volcanic activity, and someone else had found black gold. However, gold had absolutely no business being on top of an alluvial deposit near Hayden Well. Gold was not native to that deposit nor to the dark hornblende of the intrusive igneous plug. No, that gold had been brought in by someone. The deposit had been "salted," if you will!

But here at Hayden Well I had a third, more important Pegleg ingredient. One unreported in stories where such details seem irrelevant, or pass unnoticed. I had overwhelming evidence of Indian occupancy; not for habitation, but for ceremonial purpose.

So far, no one had put two and two together. All accepted the common belief that the Indians had no interest in gold until after the white man came. But is that really true? Bailey in his *Golden Mirages*, explained the entire mystery when, discussing another desert gold occurrence, he said "The Indians said they had always known it was there, and they got some of it once when they made an offering to the God of Water." Bailey should have paid

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The weakness in this theory—that American Indians did not value gold before they learned of its worth from the white man—must be considered in light of the fact that geologists have still not determined the length of time it takes desert varnish to form. It is probable that gold nuggets coated with desert varnish have been exposed in desert areas for many hundreds of years, as the climate in the region concerned has not varied appreciably for at least 600 years . . . long before the arrival of white man. If they were deposited there by Indians, the tribes who left them would have been prehistoric tribes about which we know nothing today. Ancient petroglyphs beside certain desert waterholes indicate some sort of water worship. These also are heavily coated with desert varnish.

Called "dunkel Rinden" by the Germans, patination by scientists, and desert varnish by most of us, these coated stones occur in desert regions all over the world. French scientist G. Flamand attributes it to rain water which has soaked into the rock and then been brought back to the surface by capillary action and there evaporated, leaving a deposit of chemicals with which it has become charged, according to the composition of the rock itself. The process requires neither too much, nor too little moisture. With too much, moisture leaves the rock in a liquid form; with too little, salts are not dissolved. In addition, he states that close grained rocks darken slowly due to the action of sunlight.

Another theory described by the late Jerry Laudermilk in DESERT (July '41) introduces the idea that it's a lichen that attacks rocks which contain iron and manganese. In a rainy season the lichen decays and the iron and manganese pass into solution and reprecipitate on surrounding rocks of any kind. This sort of thing continues century after century, toasting under the hot desert sun.

Today's scientists remain uncommitted to any definite theory, agreeing only that desert varnish takes a long and undetermined time to form. C.P.

more attention to his own words!

Indians were true sons of the barren lands for unknown thousands of years. Water, of the utmost importance in the desert, figured heavily in their religious rites. They stayed close to their Father of Waters, the snow-born Colorado River, whenever possible. And wasn't gold important to this life-sustaining source? Surely gold must be important to the God of Water, for does not Father River hoard these bright yellow pellets for him in favored spots? Such favored spots would later carry the names of La Paz, Picacho, and Mission San Pedro y San Pablo de Bicuñer, the latter, near modern Yuma, the place where Indians martyred Padre Francisco Garces and gave the mission gold back to their God of Water, the river.

So, said the natives in serious council, we will gather these powerful gifts where they are many and where there is much water and take them to places where the God of Water has trouble keeping the tinajas full. Thus, we will gain favor and have precious water when we need it most. But we can't just put the shining particles out on the ground in the same fashion we offer rocks to the Mountain Gods. No, we must go to the home of the God of Earth, who throws up fiery fingers in the hot desert, and close the entrance to his home with heavy rocks.

And so the golden nuggets began to move from the Colorado River to new locations across the hot desert lands, transported bit by bit by countless native hands from a place where there was much water, to places where water was scarce and needed encouragement. This was done, time and time again, until desert locations with precarious water supplies had collected a store of unnatural gold around the nearest volcanic plug or cone and been marked with ceremonial rock rings.

As for the gold particles lying in the sun, they collected a coat of desert varnish along with other rocks exposed to the elements. But there was one great difference. The golden pebbles had been worn smooth by water action before Indians moved them to these sites of springs, many now extinct.

So I say to you, the supply of Pegleg Gold distributed across the face of the Colorado Desert was always limited. Much, if not all, has been collected and lost, but in Pegleg's time there was still enough to encourage all of the "Smiths" to enthruse over their finds. Old Pegleg may have been guilty of exaggeration, but not of lying. ///



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# PAI PAI LAND

**I**N THE VALLEY of Santa Catarina, 100 miles south of the U.S. border in Baja California's high desert, there lives one of the few remaining communities of the descendants of the original inhabitants. They are of the Pai Pai Indians. Because their ancestors resisted subordination by zealous Spanish missionaries, they were saved from the annihilation that befell other native tribes who contacted the white foreigner's diseases.

We recently visited a family of Santa Catarina Pai Pais. The trip was instituted by Florence Shipek, an anthropologist who realized that valuable knowledge regarding the customs and language of this dwindling tribe must be recorded soon—or be lost forever. My husband and I accompanied the expedition as photographers, but afterward left the party to follow a route described by Randall Henderson 13 years ago when he photographed some of these same tribesmen for *DESERT* (July '52).

Crossing the border at Tecate, we picked up Ambrosio Thing, a half-Diegueno and half-American who is related by marriage to a member of the Santa Catarina Pai Pais and who was to act as our guide. Then we proceeded some 16 miles east of Te-



cate to a sign "Rancho el Compadre," where we turned south from the highway onto a good rotten-granite road which carried us through high mesa land painted pink with filaree blossoms. Towns are marked on the map but they often consist of little more than a rancho, such as El Compadre, or a cemetery, such as Neji, although larger communities do lie off on side roads.



Sheep graze in the high desert country between La Herta and Santa Catarina. Vegetation is juniper, yucca, opuntia, ribbonwood and ephedra—the latter spreading a wild blanket of orange blossoms over the land. Pino Solo is indicated on the map, but the "lone pine" is now a fallen giant and the natives have erected a barbed wire enclosure and, hopefully, planted a sapling pinon pine in the spot where the road curved around the former tree. After all, *es la costumbre!*

Santa Catarina is a small cultivated valley (elevation 3600) surrounded by hills over which large granite boulders exceed the brush. It's people are healthy, happy, proud of their valley, their children, their school, and their dam. To us they were friendly and hospitable, but it was evident they appreciated our proper introduction via Senor Thing.

Historian A. W. North wrote that

the *Mision Santa Catarina de los Yumas* was "surrounded by the fiercest Indians on the Peninsula." It was the last Baja mission founded by the Dominicans (1797), established for the purpose of linking Baja California missions with those of Sonora and the Colorado Basin. Repeated revolts finally culminated in a whopper of one in 1840, after which the last of the padres was driven away and the mission burned. Indians living there now, however, consider the mission's melted adobe walls sacred ground. These mounds, outlining rooms, exterior walls and, on a lower level, an oven and retaining wall of an old dam are all that remain today.

A new dam constructed of reinforced concrete, rock and dirt-filled, catches summer rains and holds water from a year-round spring named Ojo de Agua (Eye of Water). American

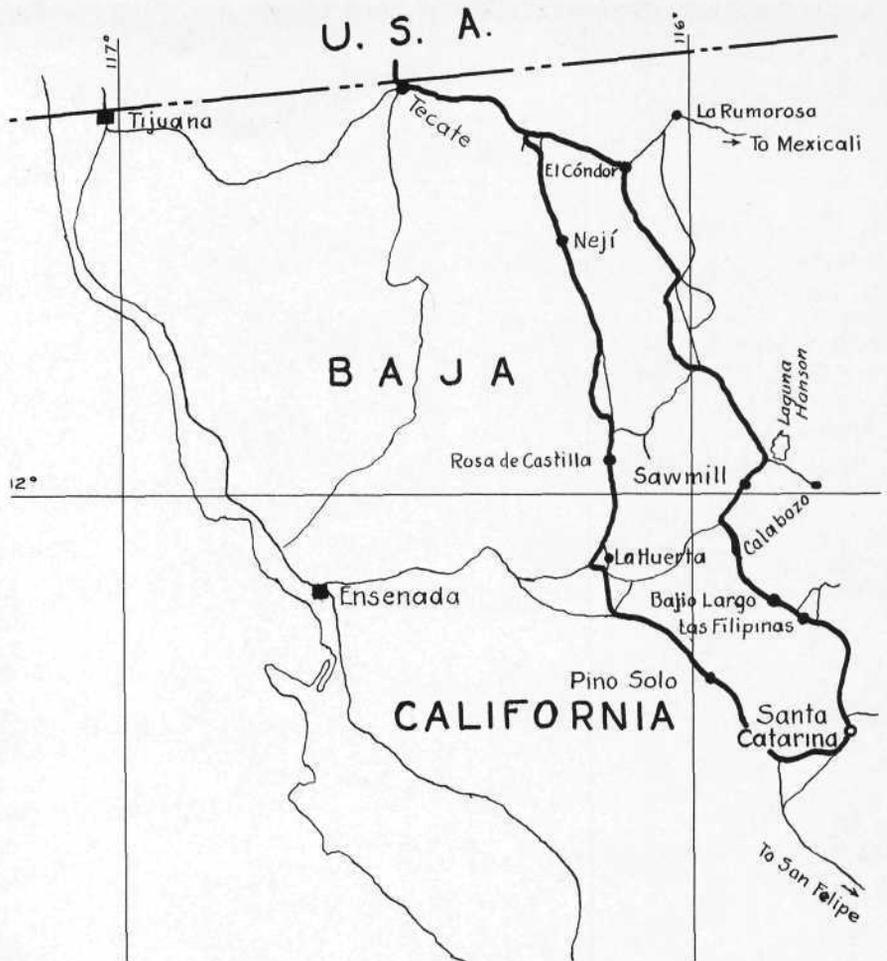


# BY BETTY MACKINTOSH

photos by  
**Bill Mackintosh**

friends of the Pai Pais helped with its design and construction and provided cement for walling and lining an open-ditch canal which carries water from the dam to the village. This is a source of community pride . . . and well it might be, considering the number of years predecessors of the tribe failed to think of it.

With the coming of darkness, Jefe Juan Albanes welcomed our party



want to repeat—especially in the springtime when wild lilacs are in bloom or, later, when low desert temperatures are too high for comfort and this country remains pleasantly cool.

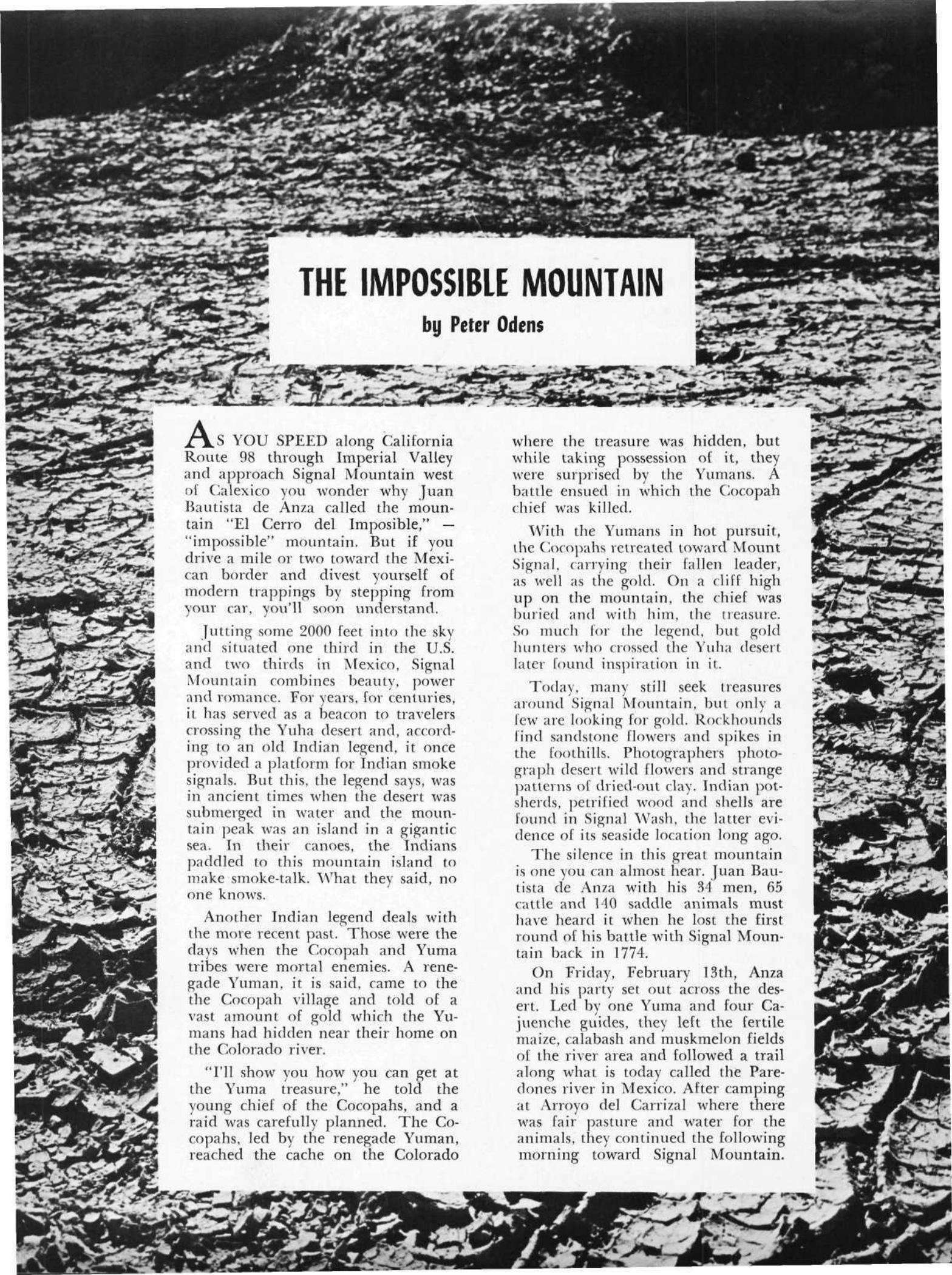
Like much of Baja, there are no accommodations below Tecate. You must be self-sufficient as to gasoline, bed, food and water, but peace, quiet and beauty lie in abundance all along the way. ///



formally in Pai Pai, after which Eugenio Albanes, the aged chief singer, rattled his gourds for attention and announced the Wildcat Song. This tribal chant tells the story of a man who turned into a wildcat. The dance that accompanies it is performed by young and old together, who link arms in a long line and sway back and forth with the singers, stepping in time to the changing rhythms of the song.

Leaving Santa Catarina in the morning, we followed close along the ridge of the Sierra Juarez, soon coming into pine and pinon country where extensive logging operations struck a fine note of progress. Here and there shallow lake beds reflected the blue sky and rocky peaks of the *sierra* punctured the scenery. Our trail consisted of two tracts, faint at that, but it was a solid one and gave us no trouble. Even without a professional incentive to visit Santa Catarina, the trip is one we





## THE IMPOSSIBLE MOUNTAIN

by Peter Odens

**A**S YOU SPEED along California Route 98 through Imperial Valley and approach Signal Mountain west of Calexico you wonder why Juan Bautista de Anza called the mountain "El Cerro del Imposible," — "impossible" mountain. But if you drive a mile or two toward the Mexican border and divest yourself of modern trappings by stepping from your car, you'll soon understand.

Jutting some 2000 feet into the sky and situated one third in the U.S. and two thirds in Mexico, Signal Mountain combines beauty, power and romance. For years, for centuries, it has served as a beacon to travelers crossing the Yuha desert and, according to an old Indian legend, it once provided a platform for Indian smoke signals. But this, the legend says, was in ancient times when the desert was submerged in water and the mountain peak was an island in a gigantic sea. In their canoes, the Indians paddled to this mountain island to make smoke-talk. What they said, no one knows.

Another Indian legend deals with the more recent past. Those were the days when the Cocopah and Yuma tribes were mortal enemies. A renegade Yuman, it is said, came to the Cocopah village and told of a vast amount of gold which the Yumans had hidden near their home on the Colorado river.

"I'll show you how you can get at the Yuma treasure," he told the young chief of the Cocopahs, and a raid was carefully planned. The Cocopahs, led by the renegade Yuman, reached the cache on the Colorado

where the treasure was hidden, but while taking possession of it, they were surprised by the Yumans. A battle ensued in which the Cocopah chief was killed.

With the Yumans in hot pursuit, the Cocopahs retreated toward Mount Signal, carrying their fallen leader, as well as the gold. On a cliff high up on the mountain, the chief was buried and with him, the treasure. So much for the legend, but gold hunters who crossed the Yuha desert later found inspiration in it.

Today, many still seek treasures around Signal Mountain, but only a few are looking for gold. Rockhounds find sandstone flowers and spikes in the foothills. Photographers photograph desert wild flowers and strange patterns of dried-out clay. Indian potsherds, petrified wood and shells are found in Signal Wash, the latter evidence of its seaside location long ago.

The silence in this great mountain is one you can almost hear. Juan Bautista de Anza with his 34 men, 65 cattle and 140 saddle animals must have heard it when he lost the first round of his battle with Signal Mountain back in 1774.

On Friday, February 13th, Anza and his party set out across the desert. Led by one Yuma and four Cajunche guides, they left the fertile maize, calabash and muskmelon fields of the river area and followed a trail along what is today called the Paredones river in Mexico. After camping at Arroyo del Carrizal where there was fair pasture and water for the animals, they continued the following morning toward Signal Mountain.

Then trouble developed. The Indians told Anza they were approaching the land of their enemies and all but two Cajuenche guides returned to the Colorado.

Another few miles west and these two stopped at an arroyo and, pointing across, told Anza that "bad people" lived on the other side. "It's a long march," they said, "but if you follow the trail to the mountain, you can do it." Then they turned back.

Anza rested for a while at the arroyo before continuing on toward Signal Mountain. For a while he could see Signal Mountain through the blowing sand and then it appeared to recede. Miles passed under the soldiers' heavy heels, but the terrible mountain remained as elusive as ever. Anza suggested that half the men return to Yuma where the friendly Chief Palma would take care of them, but the padres objected, saying it was safer to travel in a large group. Anza, however, ordered half the pack loads left with a few soldiers at a well they stumbled onto. "As soon as we arrive at that mountain over yonder," he said, "we'll send for you and for the loads. It is there, at the foot of that *cerro*, that there is water in abundance. It is there that we can rest."

Once again the column advanced on Signal Mountain. The sand grew deeper. First one, then another, and again another of the animals fell in its tracks and died. On February 17 Anza shook his fists at the mountain which he called *Cerro del Imposible* and admitted that he was beaten—at least this time. He began his retreat to Yuma, but even as more animals died on the trail, he had words of defiance and courage for his men. "We must not, and cannot, fail," Anza said. "*El Cerro del Imposible* can be beaten. In a few days, we'll try again."

Ten days after leaving the Colorado camp, Anza and his men returned to Santa Olaya, but soon he assembled a smaller group and tried again. Circling the sand dunes this trip, Anza advanced once more toward Mount Signal. This time, it provided a friendly beacon and before they reached its base, they spotted a gap—today known as Lower Pass—through which they crossed in safety. On March 22, they arrived at the Mission San Gabriel near present-day Los Angeles. *El Cerro del Imposible* had been defeated!

In the 1850s, several expeditions were sent out by the federal government to locate a railroad route to the Pacific. Among them was that of Lt.



Amiel W. Whipple who passed by Mount Signal and, in 1849, reported that it "must serve as a beacon to travelers from the Colorado and may probably be found a convenient point from which to flash gunpowder for the determination of the difference in

longitude between San Diego and the mouth of the Gila."

His report, true as it may have been, did not even begin to portray Mount Signal as it really is, with its adventure, strength and romance.

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Remnants of old mines are in wash north of Signal Mountain.

Every Gardner expedition has one objective — adventure — with each member of the camp seeking his own. Here's a report on a recent trip to Arizona where one team of adventurers turned up clues to Nummel's lost gold.

# Hovering Over Nummel's Gold

by Choral Pepper

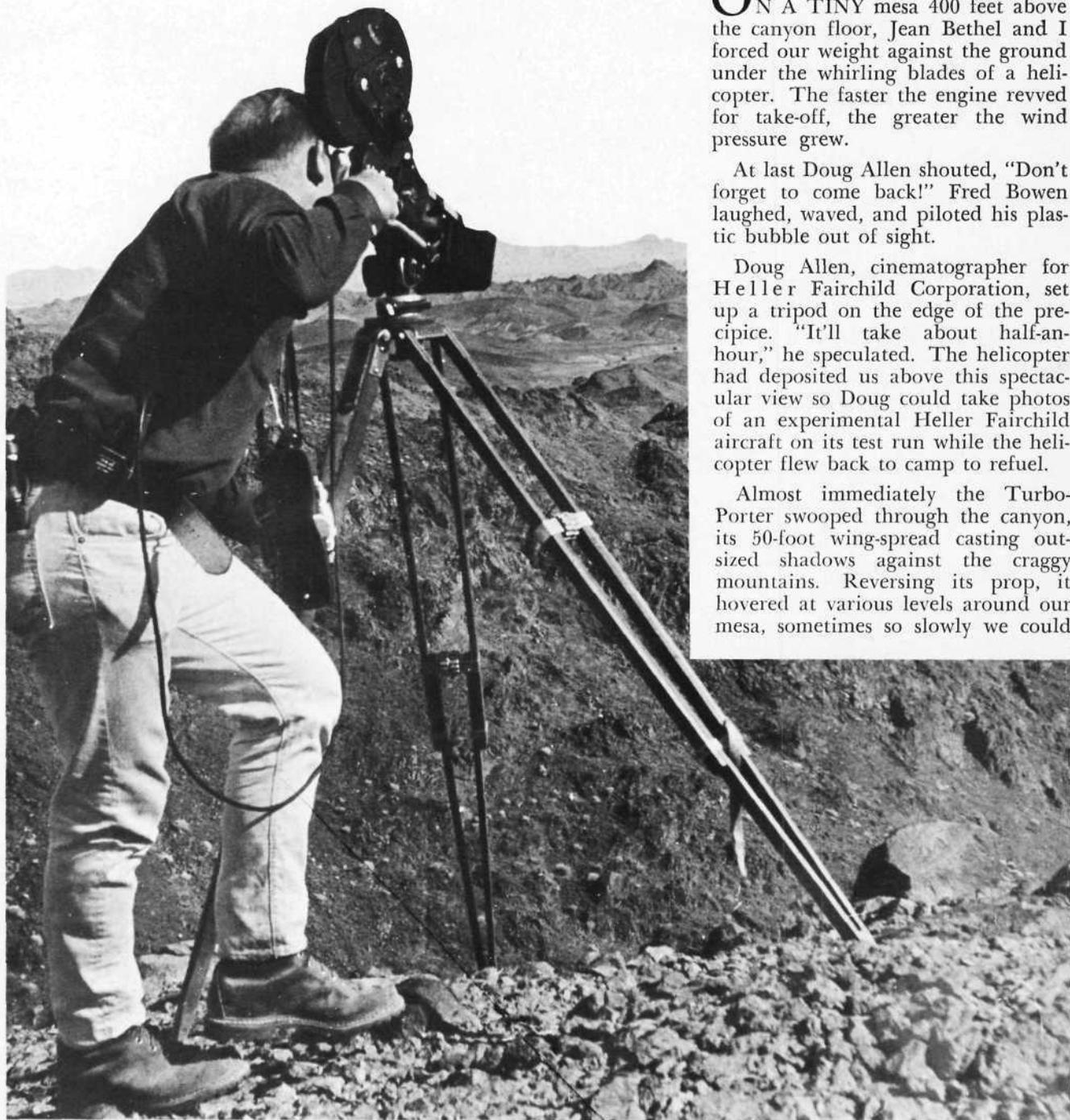
EDITOR, DESERT MAGAZINE

ON A TINY mesa 400 feet above the canyon floor, Jean Bethel and I forced our weight against the ground under the whirling blades of a helicopter. The faster the engine revved for take-off, the greater the wind pressure grew.

At last Doug Allen shouted, "Don't forget to come back!" Fred Bowen laughed, waved, and piloted his plastic bubble out of sight.

Doug Allen, cinematographer for Heller Fairchild Corporation, set up a tripod on the edge of the precipice. "It'll take about half-an-hour," he speculated. The helicopter had deposited us above this spectacular view so Doug could take photos of an experimental Heller Fairchild aircraft on its test run while the helicopter flew back to camp to refuel.

Almost immediately the Turbo-Porter swooped through the canyon, its 50-foot wing-spread casting out-sized shadows against the craggy mountains. Reversing its prop, it hovered at various levels around our mesa, sometimes so slowly we could



see Erle Stanley Gardner inside taking photos of us through the window. Planes aren't supposed to hover, nor fly at 40 miles an hour barely 30 feet above ground. But the new Turbo-Porter does both. A cross between a helicopter and an airplane, it represents a new generation of aircraft called STOL, meaning "short take-off and landing." It lands on a 30-foot runway and flies slower than any other plane in the sky, both feats accomplished by the technique of reversing the prop.

However, even though it flies low and slowly enough to favor reconnaissance, it doesn't replace the helicopter for missions such as ours. It will carry heavier loads and more passengers, and burns less fuel because it is able to cruise, but its wing-spread prohibits landing on tiny mesas barely 12-feet wide, or dropping into narrow washes where clues to certain lost mines are found. And that was the object of our reconnaissance in this great, ragged back-country of Arizona's Trigos—a lost gold-bearing ledge.

At last Doug dismissed the Turbo-Porter and it disappeared into a scape of serrated peaks. Many prospectors have struck bonanza while awaiting the return of a stray burro. Tumbling rocks through my hands, I wondered if tomorrow's prospectors would strike it rich awaiting the return of a helicopter. One thing for sure, none of the miners who had honeycombed the Trigo range below us had ever scaled the slick sides of the truncated cone upon which we sat.

Soon the 'copter returned and we drifted toward camp, peering into volcanic caves which pocked the range and debating the nature of three mysterious circles in the desert-varnished mosaic below. These last aroused all sorts of speculation until a later ground examination proved them nothing more fantastic than maneuver marks left by gyrating burros who had scratched their backs in the rough sand.

Back at camp, a multitude of ideas converged into a typical Gardner-camp wind tunnel. Uncle Erle, flying in the experimental Turbo-Porter with Sam Hicks, his ranch foreman, and Jack Pepper, had observed an interesting slash in the earth above the Clip Mine that deserved investigation. J. W. Black and Ricardo Castillo, traveling by land in Black's newly invented land-crawler, came upon a freak shaft sunk into a high canyon wall which they hoped to explore later. Camp cook Harry Murphy and his helper, David Hur-



*The Turbo-Porter, an experimental aircraft that's a cross between a helicopter and a plane, hovers over camp. Erle Stanley Gardner is about to take-off in the helicopter parked on the ground.*

tago, hiked up the hill sheltering our campsite and discovered a rich vein of chalcedony roses.

We of the helicopter contingent smiled patronizingly while the others made their reports, and then smugly announced *our* discovery. *We'd* found the clues to John Nummel's lost gold!

Jean Bethel, Erle Stanley Gardner's executive secretary and his model for Perry Mason's Della Street, is a pretty hot detective herself. Having efficiently listed clues in her notebook while Gardner (Uncle Erle to DESERT readers) gave us an advance briefing about what to

look for, she let out an excited yelp when our helicopter floated over a conspicuous quartz outcropping beside a palo verde tree. "Now we look for a pothole that would hold water," she instructed, consulting her notes.

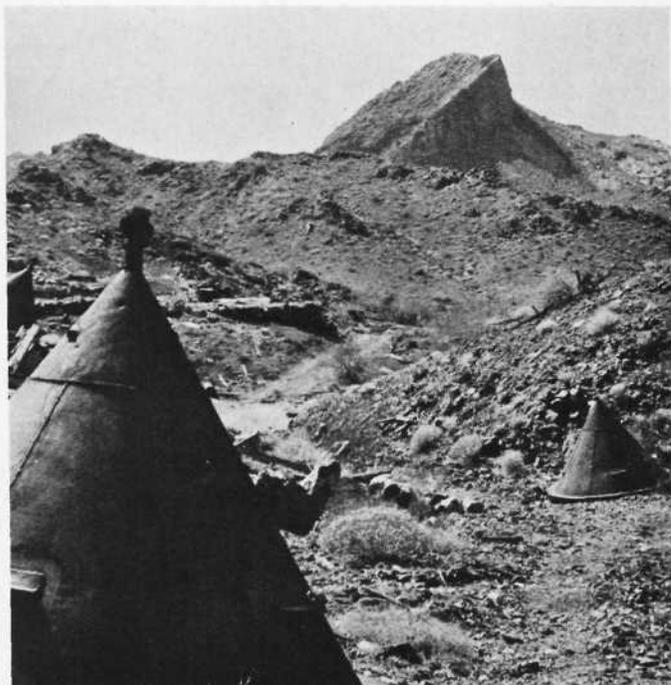
"There otta be *something* here," the pilot muttered, hovering the SL 4 over an area about as empty as any Easterner from Pennsylvania could ever hope to see. But he got into the spirit of the thing fast when he was first to spy a shaft in a wash near a shallow *tinaja*—or pothole, as Trigo miners referred to these natural stone basins that held water after a storm.

Fred settled the helicopter onto a



*Deposited by a helicopter atop a 400-foot peak, Jean and Doug examine amber-colored calcite crystals cropping through the rocky terrain.*

Massive ruins of Clip Mine lie below 80-foot shaft where over \$1 million in silver was mined from 1883 to 1887.



Our camp (photo on opposite page) was along the Jeep trail in Clip Wash between the mine and the mill site.



flat spot and we jumped out to examine outcrops of glistening quartz. One thing that puzzled us was the shaft. According to legend, John Nummel, drinking from his canteen in the shade of a palo verde tree, chipped off a hunk of quartz that was loaded with free gold, but he didn't mine it. On the contrary, he couldn't even find the ledge again. So had someone else located the ledge and taken away the gold?

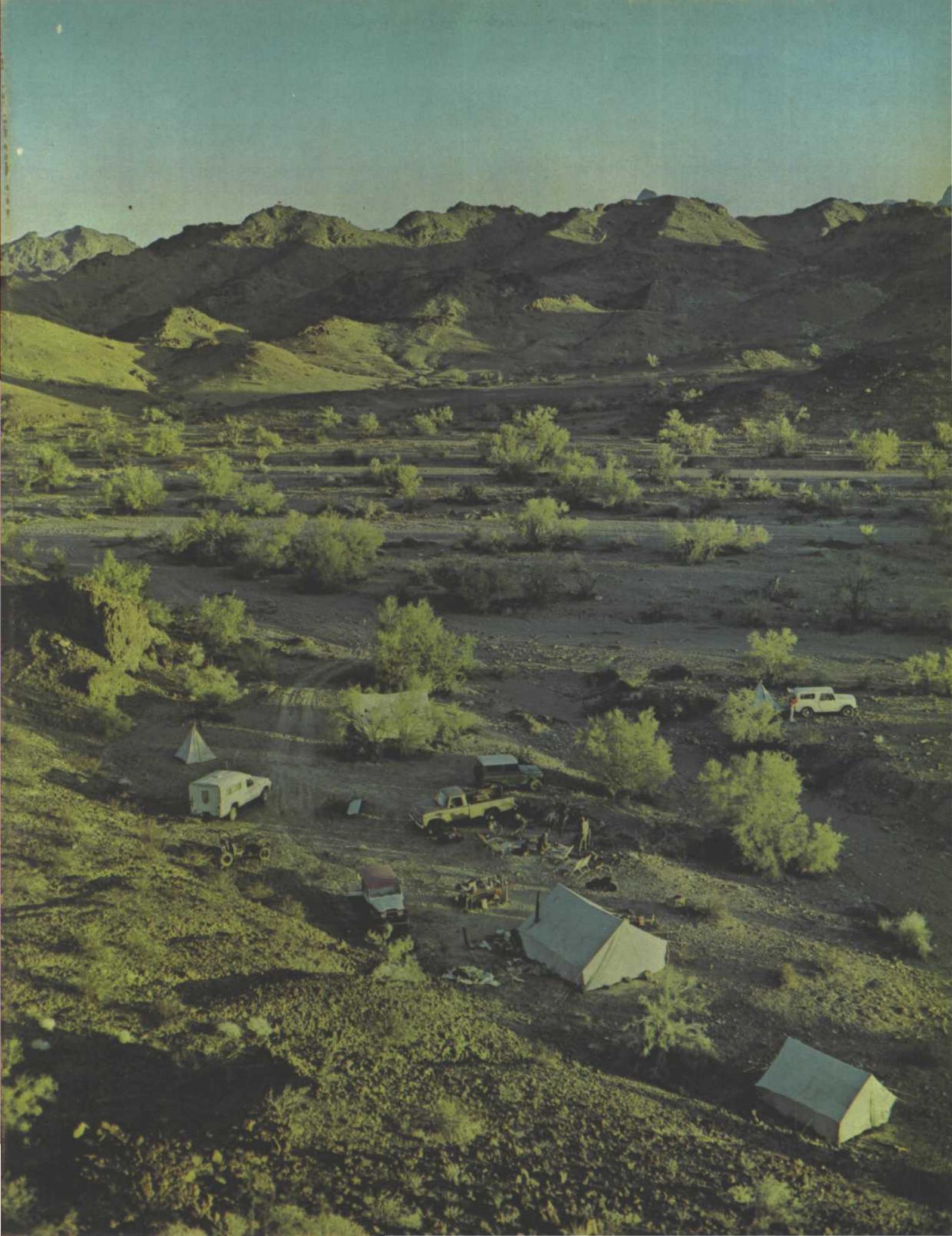
The only thing to do was get back to camp, make our announcement, and return with some of the men in camp who knew what gold-bearing quartz looked like when they were looking at it. But were we smug! At least Jean, Fred and I were. Doug Allen pretended skepticism, since he hadn't attended the Gardner briefing to learn what we were looking for.

As we expected, our news triggered a bomb under the entire camp.

Erle had chartered the helicopter for two days—the Turbo-Porter came along as a bonus because the manufacturer, Heller Fairchild Co., wanted to test it in rough country while one of their helicopters was present to provide photographic coverage. So, with refueling and photographing cutting into our time, aerial reconnaissance had to be discerningly budgeted. It was decided that Erle, Sam and Ricardo would fly over be-



Erle Stanley Gardner and J. W. Black try out new rig we christened the Red Cloud. Built with a VW engine and individual wheel suspension, its passengers float over rough terrain while it climbs, crawls, and races over everything. It's the best desert "crawler" Black has invented to date. Gardner had ordered three before we broke camp.



fore dark to appraise the promising site and then, if it looked good, the helicopter would relay the others to it on the following day.

Sometime during the afternoon Sam had hung a loin of beef on a spit over the fire and now we who remained in camp drew up our chairs to watch succulent juices drizzle down its crisp sides. Smoke carried the fragrance straight to our stomachs and when Harry sliced a smidgen for tasting, we all got in the act. There's nothing like the smell and crackle of smoldering coals in a quiet setting of sand, mesquite and jagged mountains.

Soon the whirl of the helicopter announced its return to camp. Then came a practical appraisal of our short-lived bonanza.

*Ricardo explored old mine shafts and found hand-forged square nails and soldered cans circa 1800.*

*Black collected ore specimens and found silver, but no gold.*



following day. There was the morsel about an enterprising lady in 1888 who wrote an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* about the love life of pre-historic Indians . . . not much we could do with that. And then there was a remarkable observation found in the diary of Lt. Thomas Sweeney, stationed at Fort Yuma in 1850, that concerned a Yuma Indian maiden with a ring in her nose who turned whiter and whiter as Lt. Sweeney stayed longer and longer. He called her Colorado Rose. But the great romance of the Trigos isn't to be found in frivolous courtships. No, this was a world of men . . . hard men with ambitious dreams. A world of thirsty cattle trampling rough trails from Cibola to Yuma. A land of millworkers, freighters,

*Uncle Erle soaks up sunshine while he tells the story of Nummel's lost gold.*

After dinner Sam threw a great log on the fire and each member of the camp sank into his own private revelry. I remember Erle saying he used to think chairs in camp were sissy, until he camped with some hunters in Wyoming and learned that fireside conversations were both more relaxed and more revealing when the body was comfortable enough to forget itself.

For my part, I stretched on a chaise in the firelight and let my subconscious put together bits of information I'd collected prior to the trip, hoping something irrelevant might contribute to our exploration on the



stagedrivers, stablekeepers, storekeepers, bartenders. A land of miners. That was the big thing—the *raison d'être* for the big dream.

Miners came from everywhere. They called them ten-day men because most of them drifted from one district to another, staying that many days. They mined silver, lead, zinc . . . over a million dollars of silver from the Clip Mine alone. And many of them were adventure-seeking Europeans lured by German translations of Bret Harte novels. During its heyday, the colorful author prospected Silver district himself.

Towns and postoffices sprung up everywhere, so shortlived no one has heard of them since. There was Pacific City, a stage stop on the Yuma-Elhrenberg run with a postoffice established in 1880. And there was Silent with its post office, a few miles north. And Norton Landing on the Colorado where ore wagons from the Red Cloud Mine, freighters and

"In the first place, it's in the wrong place," Erle said, pointing out that John Nummel was following an old Indian trail along the most direct route between Red Cloud Mine north of Yuma to La Fortuna Mine southeast of Yuma. When he found his gold ledge, he had already crossed Yuma Wash. The site Jean and I were so excited about was in Arrastre Wash, several miles short of the direct route Nummel would have chosen and, also, several miles on the wrong side of Yuma Wash.

In the meantime, Doug Allen was becoming increasingly interested in John Nummel's ledge. Uncle Erle had a March '56 DESERT which contained the original story, so Doug borrowed it, along with a topo map, and quietly escaped into a huddle with himself. We didn't know until later that he had graduated from Stanford University as a geographer and was an expert in tracing ancient Indian paths.



*Jack and Sam used a metal detector to locate buried remains of a townsite named Clip about a mile above the old mill site. Nothing remains of the town, but a cemetery with 18 graves indicates a fairly large population for the short-lived town.*

steamboats stopped on their travels. Its postmaster was one of the Germans who came to this fantastic land—Mr. Jacob Dettlebach.

Harder than silver to come by, though, was water. As late as 1925 a pipe-line was laid from a shallow well near Norton's Landing to carry water 20 rugged miles to a new 100-ton cyanide mill erected at Clip Mine. Supplies were hauled from Yuma via Picacho, California, and ferried across the river to Norton's Landing. But the operation wasn't successful. Even the ferry capsized once with 200 pounds of cased cyanide.

More lucrative was the earlier 1883 operation with a 10-stamp mill at the mouth of Clip Wash where ore, hauled eight miles by wagon from the Clip Mine, was milled and transported by boat down to the Gulf of California and thence to the Selby Smelter in San Francisco.

"There must be some remnant of the old town down there," Erle remarked, although from the plane he'd only been able to locate foundations of the mill. So the forgotten site of a town named Clip was added to our agenda of things to find.

Then the smoke curled higher and the fire burned lower. One by one we disappeared into the night. My tepee was pitched beside rocky Clip Wash where wagons had rumbled and feet stumbled over a century ago. Now the road was barely passable with a 4-wheel drive.

A coyote yipped. An owl hooted. A gray fox darted beyond my light. But no more did miners curse, pray, nor rub their calloused hands in the silvery bowels of the Trigos. No, no more.

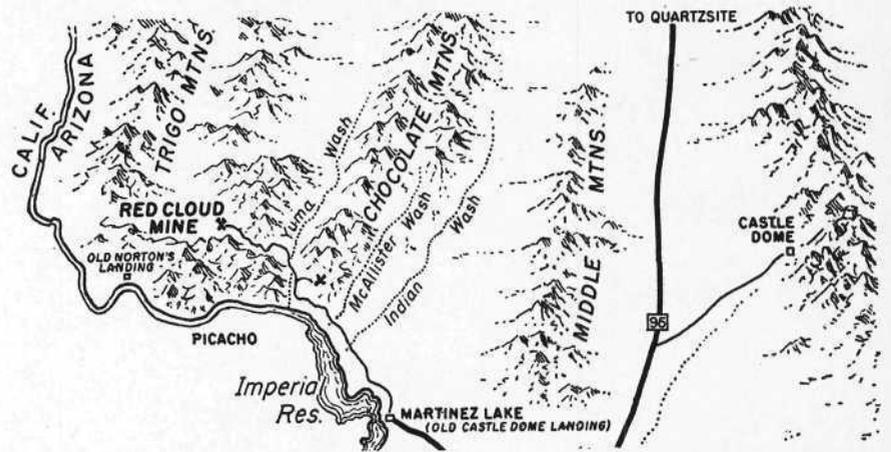
Doug Allen indicated a spot he'd circled on the topo map and the men crowded around to pass judgment.

"That's your project," Erle said. "Go to it!"

Jean, Doug and I hesitated long enough to pay our respects to Harry Murphy's bronze-tinted sour dough pancakes and then took off, determined to compensate for our fiasco of the preceding day.

This time we had plotted a definite route. According to John Nummel's story, he crossed Yuma Wash about three miles above the Colorado River on a foot trail shorter than, but roughly parallel to, the wagon trail from the Red Cloud Mine. Then, after a few more miles of walking he sat in the shade of a palo verde and took a drink from his nearly empty gallon canteen, knowing full well he could refill it from a

*X marks the spot where clues to Nummel's gold are evident.*



natural rock tank on the trail; a tank so large it would hold water for six months after a storm. While taking this brief rest he chipped off a hunk of dirty yellow quartz from a ledge in the side of the wash where he sat—and the dirty yellow quartz contained pure yellow gold. Then, after walking about another mile, he strayed from the trail some 200 yards to fill his canteen from the pothole.

Floating low over the terrain, as we were, old trails were easy to detect. Doug suggested we look closely somewhat short of three miles up Yuma Wash, as hikers usually overestimate mileage. He was right. A clear, firm trail led us as directly as possible over the rough terrain in the very direction Doug had chartered on the topo map as the shortest dis-

tance between the two points Nummel traversed—from Red Cloud Mine to La Fortuna Mine some 40 miles southeast.

By this time, Nummel had left the Trigo range and was advancing into the Chocolate Mountains, a low 25-mile long range that lies between the Trigo and Castle Dome Mountains. Fred Bowen landed the helicopter on a level spot and we continued our search afoot. This region is more level than that we'd left and there are no roads into it. However a 4-wheel drive vehicle could probably come close to where we were by leaving the Yuma Wash road at the turn of Section 16 of the USGS topo map No. N3300-W11430/15 of Picacho, Ariz.-Calif, and then driving  
(Continued on Page 40)



*To cover as much country as possible in the shortest time, Gardner checks out each team of explorers on a topo map.*

# COME TO THE DIG

BY JULIA CRAW

**D**O YOU ENJOY getting dirty for a cause? Do you like history? Would you get a kick out of contributing to science? Does a camp-out sound like fun? If the answer is, yes, then an archaeological dig is for you.

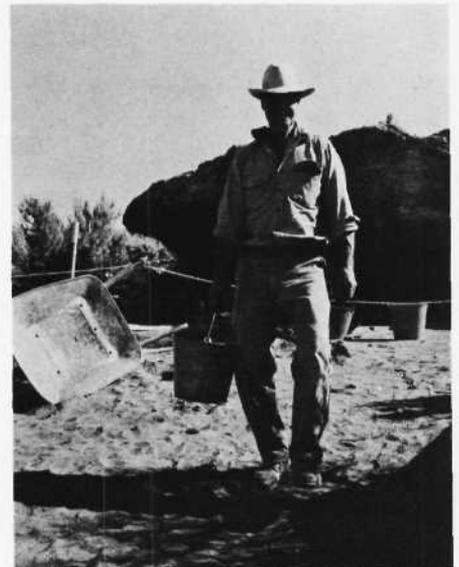
The archaeological dig is just what it says it is—a site where dirt is removed, layer by layer, pit by pit, in a search for evidence of prehistoric man. It is careful work, with each level measured, charted and recorded, and the dirt is screened and examined for clues to man's occupancy—charcoal, seeds, bones, beads, and tools. It's fascinating work and all across the country amateur archaeologists are discovering it as a truly novel and rewarding vacation activity.

Time was when archaeology was strictly hands-off for the general public. But no more. Digging, the way it must be done to be scientifically acceptable, is hard and slow. There are not enough trained men with time to do the work, nor funds to hire it done. So professionals are turning to anyone interested enough in their work to help out; even making an effort, through public information and educational programs, to get more of us interested. Amateur archaeologists, "diggers", are welcomed now on almost all digs.

There are gaps in our knowledge of man on this continent which can only be filled by evidence found in these excavations. Unfortunately, valuable sites are being destroyed by new towns, new roads, and new dams, even though scientists, backed by museums, universities, organizations and individuals, are making desperate efforts to determine the potential value of possible digs before "progress" moves in.

For two summers now, at Hot Creek in Mono County, California, UCLA archaeology students have been digging up an ancient Indian village which is soon destined for destruction by a new highway. Thousands of artifacts have been preserved, photographed and recorded. The work these students have done in a race against time will be of inestimable value to future archaeological studies.

In almost every area of the country digs go on at all seasons whenever



and wherever opportunity and climate permit. Information may be obtained from regional museums, universities, or interested organizations.

For single individuals or entire families, there is action for everyone on a dig. Digging, screening, sorting dirt, washing, grading, labeling specimens, taking pictures, making draw-

ings, keeping reports—even making and serving coffee. Every kind of effort and talent is useful and all ages are represented. Valuable finds have been credited to the sharp eyes and nimble fingers of children and many an adult over 70 has contributed valuable time.

We learned about our first dig when we read a notice in the news-



paper that one was being sponsored by a local museum. Because we have long been interested in Indian artifacts, history and lore, we signed up immediately, even though we were not given a location map until a few days prior to leaving. This precaution is taken by all archaeological expeditions to protect sites from premature vandalism . . . when we learned that the site was to be a limestone cave on a lakeshore in the heart of the eastern Sierras, we felt extraordinarily fortunate. What better place is there for a summer vacation!

Upon arriving at the dig a few days later, we found preliminary survey work had been done and the first pits were being opened. The campground was a sagebrush flat above the lake, and we were told to choose our own site among other tents, campers, trailers and bedrolls. After we had done this, we were introduced to the "dig" and made welcome by friendly jibes at our clean clothing. Soon we learned that dirt and dig are synonymous—dirt is both the priceless potential and the occupational hazard of the dig.

A professional archaeologist, directed the pattern, placement, and depth of pits and instructed us in the use of tools and working methods. Everything else was done by volunteers, some of whom had studied or participated in enough digs to qualify as experts.

Our fellow vacation-laborers came from everywhere and from every walk of life. Mothers, teachers, doctors, ranchers, salesmen, artists, retired couples, students—they all dug in the dirt, joked and talked with a camaraderie that made each hot, tedious, dirty job a joy. They came and went as their schedules permitted; some only for a day or an afternoon, others for a week or a week end, a few for the full three weeks term of the dig.

It was a happy crew. As one member remarked, "Our faces may be black, but our hearts are light." The digger who let a point get past him to the sorters (points are supposed to be spied and recorded *in situ*) was due for some good-natured bantering. Practical jokes, pranks and gossip enlivened each day. Coffee breaks could be called for anything from an educational demonstration on charcoal preservation to a watermelon. And a wild jubilee echoed through the hills in the wake of each worker's "find."

In early afternoon the dig closed for the day and, after clean-up, we



"No thanks, I gave it up!"

fished, visited local points of interest, or hunted rocks and arrowheads for our own collections. At dark a community campfire united us in a never-to-be-forgotten bond while we joined in scientific discussions or just plain tall tales.

If it sounds like fun—it was! But

it was also a serious contribution to historical research and this realization was always a part of our light-hearted banter. It's a good feeling to know you are doing something significant to increase mankind's knowledge of man and involved in a stimulating, active vacation as well. ///

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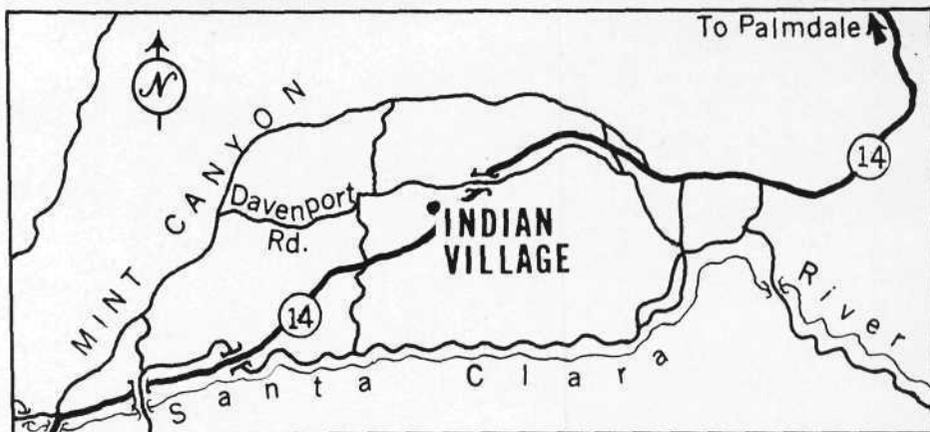
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# New Indian-Frontier Village



by Margaret Romer

**D**REAMS DO COME true! Such a materialization is the Indian-Frontier Village 40 miles north of Hollywood. It has recently been brought forth, not for profit, but to fulfill the life-long dream of its creator, Robert E. Callahan. It is a work of love to be shared with all who wish to walk into the past, to see, to enjoy, and to learn. Everybody loves the place. Children love it, and learn. Old folks love it, and reminisce.

Located in Mint Canyon, near Vasquez Rocks where the notorious bandit, Tiburcio Vasquez, harassed stagecoaches for 20 years (DESERT Dec. '64), visitors can now rest securely in a verdant ravine where Vasquez watered and hid his horses. Another short walk leads to a spring that supplies an old green water tank built by the Indians and is still frequented by deer and bobcats that come down the mountain slope in the early morn.

The Village doesn't stop with local history; it features that of our entire West. Near the creepy blackness of an abandoned gold mine, there's a replica of an old miner's hut, an early jail, and an outlaw's hideout. Then there's a white country church such as dotted our country from Boston to Los Angeles a century ago. Inside is a conventional altar and genuine old pews cut down from ones that came around the Horn in a sailing vessel and were used in an early Los Angeles church.

Not far from the church is a little red school house with blackboard and scarred desks. The only things missing here are blonde pigtailed to be dipped into inkwells by freckle-faced boys. Other reminders of the past include a "Chic' Sayles" outhouse, which makes you skeptical about

how good were "the good old days"—especially in freezing winter weather!

Scattered here and there everywhere are brightly colored totem poles. Mr. Callahan is 1/16 Mohawk Indian, which contributes to his intense interest in Indians and their tribal customs. He is also a descendant of John C. Calhoun, the renowned statesman and vice-president under Andrew Jackson.

It must not be imagined that Mr. Callahan has been a dreamer all his life. Recently retired from the business world, he has been variously a run-away boy, a hobo, a dare-devil stunt man, an author, an actor, a business man and the producer of 52 documentary educational films on the life and customs of as many Indian tribes.

For many years, Mr. Callahan operated a five-acre Los Angeles motel and trailer park, where he accumulated a collection of Indian and pioneer relics and worked constantly toward the materialization of his



dream—the present Indian-Frontier Village. After a long search, he located a 12-acre tract of land in Mint Canyon and started his Village, using his famed collection of relics as a nucleus.

An outstanding exhibit is his Hopi kiva—one of the only two kivas in existence outside of Indian reservations. Both are here in the Village. Kivas are Indian Prayer Houses, but only men are permitted inside. There they go to hold religious ceremonies and commune with the Holy Spirit. There they pray for rain, or for the healing of a sick child, or for whatever is their immediate need. Ceremonies are said to be truly beautiful and deeply impressive. Here in the Village, women may enter the kiva as well as men. But all who enter remember it as a sacred place—the church of the Pueblo village.

Other tribes are also represented. There's a Mohawk wigwam of 1670, a Sioux tepee of the turn of the century; a Seminole chickee of the same period; a Cherokee lodge; a Laguna pueblo; a Navajo hogan, and many others.

Another unique exhibit is Good Luck Hall, decorated with over 10,000 horse shoes collected from Western ranches. Each shoe was actually worn by a faithful horse or mule that contributed his humble bit to the development of our great land.

Here are 140 wagon and buggy wheels that actually rolled westward, each wheel bearing a descriptive tag. Visitors delight in finding ones from their own home states. Among them is one from the buggy which carried Helen Hunt Jackson across Southern California when she gathered material for her immortal novel Ramona.

In the main building's museum hall is a wooden cradle that rocked Buffalo Bill (William Cody) when he was babe; and another slept in by notorious Jesse James. And there stands the old pedal organ on which Carrie Jacobs Bond composed "I Love You Truly" and "The End of a Perfect Day." Mrs. Bond was a personal friend of Mr. Callahan.

It has been necessary to charge a nominal admission fee to cover maintenance costs, but once inside you may stay as long as you like and wander at will. In sharing his knowledge and treasures with the public, Mr. Callahan has made a major contribution to American history and to the culture of Southern California. Everyone who leaves the Village does so with a deeper appreciation for modern advantages, comforts and conveniences, and a hearty respect for those who preceded us here. ///

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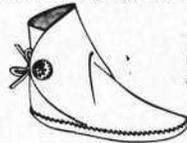
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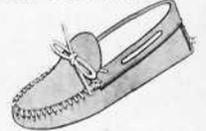
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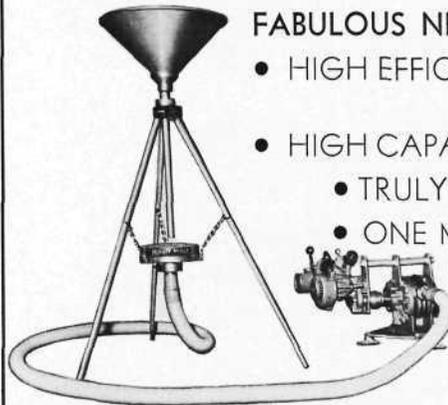
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# Desert Justice

**N**OW THAT the sun had set, Eve Sharon appreciated for the first time the immensity of the desert and the loneliness of her own position.

Far in the west, there was still a streak of light which illuminated the rim of the mountains. The base of that mountain range was ominously black.

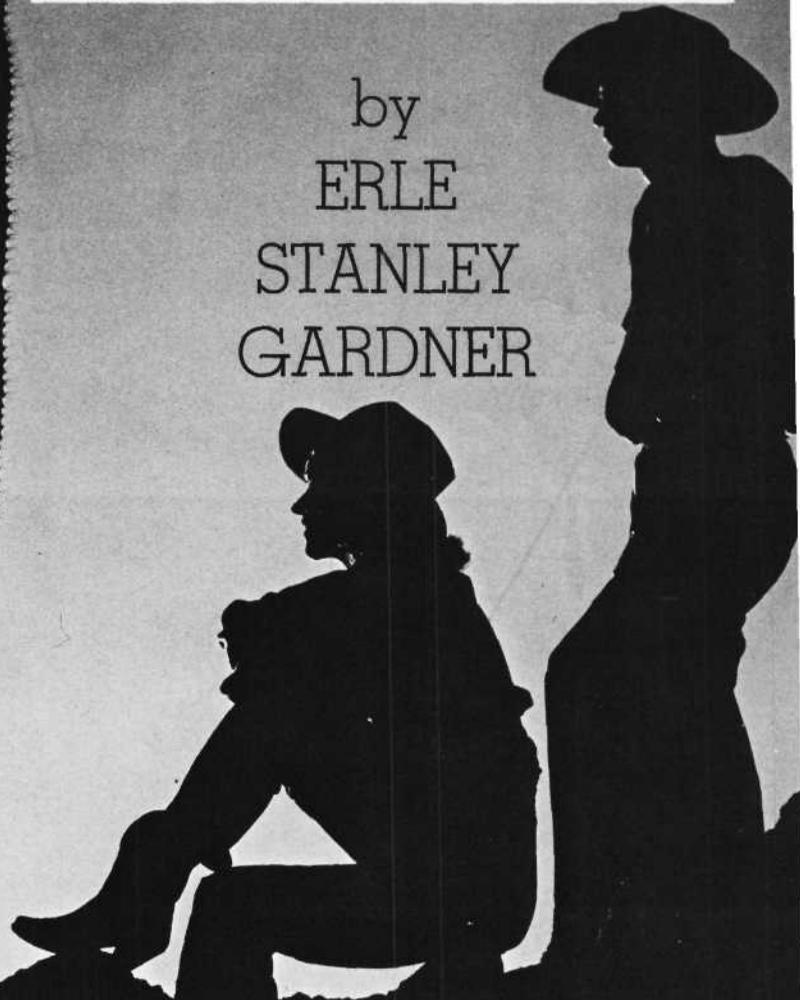
The tent in which Eve Sharon was to spend the night was perched on the side of another mountain slope. Between the mountains in the west and the place where the tent was pitched, there was now only a great black pool of mysterious darkness.

Overhead the stars began to peer down on the lonely girl.

The tent itself was perched at a crazy angle. Any desert person seeing the tent would have wondered why it had been placed there on such slanting ground.

The answer was simple. In the center of the ground covered by that tent, that very afternoon, Dudley Sharon—Eve's uncle—had uncovered a vein

by  
ERLE  
STANLEY  
GARDNER



Although our usual editorial policy precludes fiction, we are adding extra pages to the next few issues to introduce a desert character newly created by famous mystery writer Erle Stanley Gardner. This new character, a desert wanderer known as The Roadrunner, is destined to become as popular with desert dwellers as another Gardner character, Perry Mason, is to mystery lovers all over the world. Reflecting Gardner's love and knowledge of desert country, we believe the fictional Roadrunner's adventures belong on our pages and we are proud to have been able to acquire first publication rights to bring this two-part serial to DESERT readers.

of quartz in which the gold was so thick that it was impossible to break off even a sample of the rock without the gold enmeshed in the quartz forming wires of solid yellow metal as the two pieces of rock were separated.

No need to have an assay of any such ore as that. It was fabulously rich and the vein certainly seemed to be wide enough.

But this quartz outcropping, which had somehow escaped being uncovered over the centuries, was in a district where there had been a lot of mining around the turn of the century when wages were such that it was profitable to mine gold ore which would be impossible to process today. There were a half dozen old mines in the vicinity.

Eve's uncle hadn't known what to do.

He didn't dare to locate the outcropping as a claim for fear that he would find that he was in the middle of some claim which had already been located and on which assessment work had been done.

In such a case, Dudley Sharon would, of course, be making a gratuitous present of his discovery to some person who had simply kept a location alive on the old claims which had apparently been worked out many years before.

So, above all, Dudley Sharon needed to know the status of the land on which his rich strike had been located.

He could think of only one way to do that.

He had carefully covered up the outcropping which was about two feet below the surface of the ground, had pitched the tent over the place, left his niece in charge; and then Dudley, armed with a sketch map showing the location of the various landmarks and old mining claims, had taken the car and started for the county seat.

He had left his only weapon, a .22-revolver, with Eve Sharon—and Eve had been instructed not to leave the site of the gold discovery under any circumstances, but to remain in physical possession until his return, which would be some time the next day.

Night settled over the silent desert. Stars blazed. In the distance, a coyote tuned up a mournful dirge.

Eve lit the gasoline lantern in the tent, but after half an hour the light seemed to make the tent too conspicuous so Eve turned it out. As it hissed into silence, the desert seemed to move in.

She couldn't sleep at first. Then she did fall asleep, only to waken after a restless hour.

After another hour, there was a peculiar sound. At first, she thought this sound might be a distant radio.

Eve came bolt upright out of her sleeping bag, went to the front of the tent, opened the flap, and listened.

In the distance, she was positive she could hear a man's voice calling faintly.

Eve put on her outer garments, her desert boots, and went back to the front of the tent to listen.

There were no sounds now.

Then, suddenly and quite distinctly, Eve heard a man calling for help.

The voice was down in the pool of darkness below the tent.

Eve called out, "What's the trouble?"—and her voice, quavering with nervousness, seemed to be swallowed up by the vast silence.

There was no direct answer but, after a moment, the cry for help was repeated again—this time, nearer.

Eve listened.

Quite apparently, some man was coming closer to her and calling for help. And then, suddenly, the voice screamed, "I'm falling!" Then all was silent.

With a start of fear, Eve recollected the open shaft in the vicinity, relics of bygone mining activities—shafts which dropped perpendicularly into the earth for unknown distances.

That afternoon, she had dropped little pebbles down one of these shafts, listening for several seconds until the stones struck the bottom.

Had someone been stumbling toward her tent, calling for help and then fallen down one of these shafts?

Eve grabbed up a small flashlight which she kept in her purse (her uncle had taken the big flashlight) and hurried down the steep slope toward the nearest of the open shafts.

The flashlight was a pocket type which was rechargeable by plugging it into an electric socket, but it had been some time since she had recharged the battery and now the light was ominously faint—serving only to show the ground a few feet ahead, just far enough to keep her from falling into one of these open shafts.

And then, Eve heard in the distance a peculiar moaning.

Using the flashlight, she groped her way toward the sound. At times, it was faint; at times, stronger. As she moved toward the noise, she suddenly recoiled as an open shaft yawned in front of her.

From the depths of this shaft, a human voice was groaning and muttering incoherent words—words which sounded as though there was bubbling blood on the lips of the man who had uttered them.

"Who are you? Are you hurt? Can I help?" Eve asked.

There was no answer save a continuation of the incoherent words, the groaning and, then, a dead silence. Eve lay flat on the ground, called down into the dark well of silence. There was no answer.

Then suddenly, behind Eve, the whole side of the mountain was lit with a burst of flame.

Eve's horrified eyes looked back to see that the place where her tent had been was now an inferno of flame.

She turned and ran blindly up the side of the slope, only to suddenly find herself brought to a halt as she heard the throaty growl of a dog and a man's voice saying, "That's far enough. What do you want?"

"My tent," Eve said, "my sleeping bag, my purse, everything."

"Was that your tent?" the man asked.

"Yes."

"What do you mean trying to jump our claim?"

"I'm not claim jumping," Eve said. "I was . . . I was camped here. Who are you?"

"We own this claim," the man said. "And we don't aim to have any trespassers on it. You must have left a fire in the stove and your tent burned up."

"The fire was down to embers," Eve said, "so it was perfectly safe. You burned up my tent."

"Your tent just caught fire from carelessness," the man's voice said. "Now, you keep your distance. This dog gets pretty vicious. If I turn him loose, he'd chase you plumb out of the country."

"But what am I going to do?" Eve asked. "I have no sleeping bag, no place to stay. I . . . I don't believe you have a claim located here anyway."

"Show you the location monument and the location notice, if you want," the man said, coming out from behind a rock which had sheltered him so that Eve could see him silhouetted against the glowing embers of all that remained of her worldly possessions. "You stay right there. I'm going to get my partner down here and we'll talk it over. We don't aim to be rough, but we sure ain't going to have some slick dame use a lot of sex appeal to jump our claim."

The man turned, raised his voice, yelled, "Hello, George!"

Another masculine voice answered from farther up the hillside.

"Come on down here a minute," the first man said, and himself started climbing to meet his partner halfway.

The two men held a low-voiced conference, then the man with the dog came back and said to Eve Sharon, "We don't aim to be unneighborly like, but we're not going to have you on our claim."

"But I can't just sit out here all night," Eve said.

"Well, we're not going to abandon our claim to drive you anywhere.

"We went into town for supplies this afternoon and, evidently, you must have jumped our claim while we were getting bacon and frijoles.

"I know it seems rough to you, but the road that you'll find just around the side of that mountain runs down here two or three miles to a road that will take you to town. It's about fifteen to twenty miles to town, but there's a cabin on that road about six miles down, and a fellow lives there. He'll take you into town if you pay him.

"That's the best we can offer."

Eve said, "There's a man in that shaft down the hill. I heard him scream and fall in, and—and then I heard him moaning."

"If he's fallen in there, there ain't no use trying to get him out with any equipment we've got," the man said. "But if you're sure somebody fell in there, you can telephone the sheriff when you get to where you're going.

"I'll take my flashlight and escort you as far as the first mining road so you won't be falling down any shafts yourself. It's dangerous walking around here in the dark. You'll fall to your death."

"But that's what happened to this man I'm telling you about," Eve said. "I heard him scream and then I heard sounds of moaning and then silence."

"Know what shaft it was?" the man asked.

"Not now. When I saw my tent burning, I came running toward it . . . and now, I've lost the shaft. I can find it if you'll use your flashlight. Mine's burnt out."

"Nothing doing," the man said. "If anyone fell down any of these shafts, it's too late to do anything for him. I'll take you to the road if you want to start now. That's **all** I'll do. Make up your mind."

There was an air of finality about the man's manner, and, sick at heart, Eve turned away from the mountain and the vicious teeth of the snarling dog. "All right," she surrendered.

The man called George used his flashlight to take her back to the rutted road which in some past generation had serviced these mines. It was rough and washed-out in places by desert cloudbursts, but at least there were no yawning mine shafts along this road.

"All right," the man said. "You're on your own now. Follow this road a couple of miles and you'll come to the main road to town. Be careful not to get off the road. Goodbye."

He turned and left her in darkness.

It took Eve's eyes a few minutes to get accustomed to the starlight. Then she started a cautious progress, straining her eyes to see the very faint outline of the rutted road.

Suddenly a man's voice, drawling and friendly, came out of the darkness. "You trying to go someplace, Miss?"

Eve's taut nerves caused her to jump as though she had trod on a rattlesnake. She gave a half-scream before getting enough self-control to ask, "Who . . . who are you?"

"Name's LeClaire," the man said, with a chuckle. "Don't ask my nationality. I'm a composite. And there ain't no call for you to be afraid.

"First name is Jon, spelled J-O-N. Some folks call me the Roadrunner."

Again the man chuckled.

"What—what are you doing out here? And what do you want?" Eve asked.

"Been sort of keeping an eye on you," the voice explained. "I like your spunk. If you want to walk down the road a piece with me, I've got some transportation parked a half mile away and I can take you in to where you can phone the sheriff."

"But what are **you** doing here? How did you happen to know anything about me?"

"I get around on the desert," the man said. "I

like it. Sort of soak it up, I guess. I was lying in my sleeping bag when I saw your tent go up in smoke. I says to myself, 'Jon, that fire is sort of gasoliny-like!' So I decided to investigate.

"I wasn't too far behind you when the two men with the dog warned you off.—I didn't know just how far you were going, but I've been following along a ways behind ever since, just keeping an eye on you."

"I didn't hear you."

"I wear heavy moccasins," Le Claire said. "Feet get toughened up after a while and you can just glide along over the desert. I didn't aim to let that guy get his flashlight on me. I sort of kept off to one side."

"Well, I'd . . . I'd like to have a look at you."

"Sure thing," the man said. "Stoop down and you can see me silhouetted against the stars."

She stooped, heard a faint stir of motion, then a man's figure was silhouetted against the light of the star-studded sky—a tall man who moved with easy grace.

At first, Eve didn't realize what was over his shoulder, then she recognized it as a quiver of feathered arrows and the man was holding a long bow in his left hand.

"What in the world . . .?" Eve asked.

LeClaire chuckled. "Bow and arrow. Probably seems sort of inadequate to you, if you've been accustomed to pistols and rifles; but believe you me, the bow and arrow is about the best weapon a man can get if he wants to defend himself after dark, and it's a mighty good weapon to get game, if he's looking

for rabbit or quail.— And it's silent. You can use it without letting everybody in the country know that you're out getting your breakfast.

"If those folks had turned that dog loose on you, Ma'am, it would have been just too bad for the dog, and might have been too bad for the folks. I had a broadhead arrow on the string, and the minute that dog made a lunge at you he'd have had an arrow through his chest.—Now, you want to go where you can telephone the sheriff. If you'll just walk about a half mile farther, we'll come to my desert-going contraction — there ain't any headlights on it and, to be safe, we're going to have to wait for the moon to come up; but the moon will be up in an hour—not much of a moon because she's pretty much on the wane, but it'll be enough moon to show us the road."

"Why don't you have headlights on your—what you call your contraction?"

"I don't believe in them. I settle down after dark and stay put. —Of course, we **could** feel our way over the desert without the moon, but it'd be dangerous."

Eve found herself liking this man. There was a genuine, raw-hided sincerity about him, a drawling good nature in his voice which made her accept him; and there was, of course, the knowledge that, really, she had no choice.

"Let's go," she said.

The man took her arm. "I've got so I see in the dark like a cat.—Well, perhaps not that good, but pretty good. You just let me take your arm, and we'll be where we're going in no time at all."

Strong, muscular fingers touched Eve's arm at



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the elbow, held her as the figure at her side glided silently over the desert.

"Little washout right ahead, Ma'am," he said. "Just take it easy—there you are—avoid that big boulder.—Okay now."

They walked for another half mile in silence, then LeClaire said, "Here's the place, Ma'am, just right this way."

He guided her to what seemed in the starlight to be something of a mechanical monstrosity—a four-wheeled platform, above which were heavy bars. A long steering wheel stretched from the front axle to the two seats underneath the heavy bars.

"Some contraption," the man said proudly. "Designed it myself. It'll go anywhere. Every wheel is individually suspended. It'll run just about all day on two-three gallons of gasoline.

"Now, if you don't mind, I'll roll up my sleeping bag and tie it on behind here and get that little carton of camp stuff lashed on top of it, and we'll be ready to go soon as the moon comes up over the mountain there behind us.

"You just sit in that seat and make yourself comfortable."

Eve settled herself into the cushion.

"Better put that seat belt on while you're thinking of it," the man said. "These here bars are what they call roll bars. In case this contraption turns over on a side hill, you can't get hurt as long as you're tied in the seat. These roll bars will take the shock."

"I've never seen anything like it," Eve said.

LeClaire chuckled. "Nobody has. Invented it myself. Had it made to my own specifications."

He busied himself in the darkness. She could hear canvas being folded, and then the sound of ropes being drawn tightly about a bed roll.

After a while he joined her, taking the driver's seat on the lefthand side of the roll bar.

"Think you could maybe find that shaft all quiet like after the moon came up?" he asked.

"I — — I don't know. I got pretty confused."

"There weren't any more sounds after those first moans?"

"No."

"I ain't got any rope with me except this light bed rope," LeClaire said. "That wouldn't be heavy enough or long enough. Our best bet is to wait for the moon and then call the sheriff."

They were silent as Eve realized how right he was, how dangerously futile any attempt at further exploration would be.

"Goin' to get nervous while you're waiting?" LeClaire asked Eve.

"I'm nervous because of the things that have happened," she said, "but, ordinarily, I don't mind waiting—that is, in the desert. I get nervous if I'm waiting in an airplane terminal or something of that sort, but the desert seems different."

"Sure is different," Jon said. "The desert is the kindest mother a person ever had—teaches you to be self-reliant and punishes you when you make mistakes. But, taken by and large, she gives you peace, tranquility and understanding.

"Take those stars, for instance. You look at them and try to think of what they are, and your mind just goes so far and then blanks out.

"An infinity of space, and then more space; and when you come to the end of that, there's still an infinity. — Your mind can't contemplate it without falling back on itself.

"Now, the desert is like that—lots of space, lots of silence. Mysterious desert winds."

"You love it, don't you?" she said.

"Every inch of it."

"Tell me, do you think—is it possible that my uncle and I actually did pitch our tent on a claim that someone else had located?"

"Anything's possible," LeClaire said. "It's also possible that those people are playing a pretty fast game. If they'd had a real good claim staked out and had to go to town for provisions, seems like one of the men would have been hanging around.—Course, you can't tell."

"Is there any way of finding out?" Eve asked.

"Could be," he said cryptically. "Lots of gold still left in the desert. Go twenty miles and you're almost certain to have walked over a fortune. Maybe it's five hundred feet down, maybe a hundred, maybe only twenty feet or so. The surface outcroppings have been pretty well located and mined out, but the desert still has her gold.

"Gold ain't as important as people think, anyhow. It comes in handy once in a while, but there ain't no call to get excited about it."

"Yes, I suppose so," Eve agreed, noncommittally.

Sitting there in the darkness, Eve felt warmth and a sense of protection.

Two or three times she wanted to say something, but the silence of her companion indicated that he had pretty thoroughly covered the situation and didn't care to engage in more conversation.

At length, she saw a rim of golden light touch the mountains behind her; and then, after a few minutes, a moon—past the half full—came sliding into view.

Jon wordlessly pressed a starter button and the motor throbbed to life.

"Now this is going to be a little coolish," he said, "but I'm going to have you in town in just a short time. This buggy can really get up and go when it has to, and I think we'd better make a little time.

"You can telephone the Sheriff's Office, and he'd better come out and have a look at that mining shaft."

The car glided into motion.

Cool desert wind whipped Eve's hair, but the fresh air was exhilarating.

The machine shifted into speed, and Eve was astounded at the way it went over the desert. Where her uncle's car had jolted and banged and they had been forced to slow down for desert washes, LeClaire's car seemed to fairly float over the rough road—at times on three wheels, at times on four—but always with an absence of the heavy jarring impact which was so characteristic of conventionally sprung automobiles on the desert.

In less than half an hour, they had reached the little settlement where LeClaire got a service station

restaurant operator out of bed, used the telephone, and notified the sheriff of what had happened.

The proprietor turned on the stove in sleepy-eyed resignation and made coffee.

"You'll have a Search-and-Rescue party out here in about an hour or so," LeClaire said, "and they'll probably want ham and eggs and coffee. You'd better be getting things together."

"I knew it," the proprietor said. "As soon as that coffee gets ready I'm going to be my own best customer."

LeClaire nodded, turned to Eve. "Now, we've got to be mighty sure about this, Eve," he said "You sure you heard someone mumbling and moaning down that shaft?"

She nodded.

"The sounds couldn't have been coming from somewhere else?"

"No, very definitely they were coming out of the depths of that shaft."

"I'll take your word for it," he said after a long moment. "I didn't get into the action until after I saw that fire. — I'll tell you one thing, that tent of yours didn't burn up from no wood stove or no embers. That tent was doused in gasoline and then somebody threw a match."

"Could . . . could we prove that?" she asked.

He was silent for a moment, then said, "Probably not. At least, not by the time we'll be getting back."

The Search-and-Rescue Squad arrived shortly before daylight.

From the first, they were inclined to doubt at least part of Eve's story, and they were curious about Jon LeClaire and his "contraption."

Jon, however, simply answered questions about himself with laconic brevity. What was he doing? Prospecting. prospecting for what? Gold. How could he carry his outfit on such a car? "Beats carrying it on a burro," Jon said. "It'll carry half again as much."

The rescue squad hurriedly had coffee, ham and eggs and were ready to start.

During the hasty meal, Eve heard one of the men mutter in a low voice, "The Roadrunner" — and, after that, there were no more questions asked Jon LeClaire.

"Now, don't you go away and leave us," the chief deputy said as they started out. "And don't make us break any springs trying to keep up."

"I'll be easy with you," LeClaire promised with a smile.

"It's going to be a little drafty, riding in that outfit of yours," the man said. "We can take the girl with us."

Eve smiled. "Oh, no," she said, "I'm dressed warmly, and I like it."

"It sure does look like it would ride easy," the deputy admitted. "Here, I've got some blankets in the trunk, and you can wrap a blanket around you."

"No, no, I'm fine," Eve said, "particularly if we aren't going too fast."

"We're taking it easy," LeClaire promised and, as he looked at her with approval, Eve knew that she had gone up in his estimation.

They started slowly over the road back. The desert turned a pastel shade of pink, then crimson clouds flared into brilliance in the east and the sun came over the mountains.

"You try to look through a windshield in this sort of light," LeClaire explained, "and you can't see where you're going. It gets all pitted up, the desert and the sun turns it into kind of a ground glass effect. — Me, I like to see where I'm going."

"Me, too," she said, and realized suddenly that he had caused her to follow his example of laconic speech.

Half way to their destination, LeClaire said, "Anything you want me to know before we get there?"

"Yes," she said.

"Shoot."

She told him the whole story—of her uncle, of their rich strike, of her uncle's departure for town.

Jon simply grunted. "I'd surmised as much," he said. "Your uncle should be at the county seat when the offices open up, and he'd ought to be done by noon. He'll be back somewhere around dark tonight."

"That's what he expected," she said. "He will bring fresh provisions, and—Heavens! He won't know anything about what's happened. We won't have a tent, or—I won't have a sleeping bag."

"It's okay," Jon said. "The Search-and-Rescue car of the sheriff has a radio telephone. It'll be in touch with the Sheriff's Office, and we'll tell him to get a message to your uncle soon as your uncle comes into the county offices."

The man in the car behind them honked his horn.

LeClaire pulled to the side of the road and stopped.

"We'll take the lead when we get near that mining shaft," the deputy said. "We don't want any tracks fouled up."

"Sure not," Jon said indignantly. "Think I didn't know that?"

He snorted as he eased the car into gear. "Some of those young deputies think they know it all.—I'd been reading tracks in the desert when that young squirt was in knee-pants. — Now, you show me where the mining shaft is, and when we get within about fifty yards of it we'll stop the car and let them walk up to it."

"I'm not certain I can direct you to the right shaft right away," Eve said. "There are a good half dozen of them along the flat at the base of that mountain."

"I know," LeClaire said. "Just do the best you can."

Eve said, "I know I came down from the tent and was bearing a little to the left. I . . . It could be over there about a hundred yards."

LeClaire brought the desert-going vehicle to a stop. The deputy pulled up alongside of them.

LeClaire pointed. "She thinks it could be a shaft about over in there."

The deputy said, "Do you see what I see?"

"Of course, I do," LeClaire snorted. "A set of rather dim automobile tracks going in that direction."

"Yours, by any chance?" the deputy asked.

"Don't be silly," LeClaire said. "Look at these wheels. — They aren't leaving **any** tracks on this hard ground. The automobile that came over here left some tracks all the way, and in the softer places you can even see the pattern of the tire treads."

"All right," the deputy said, "we'll leave the cars here for a moment, walk over on foot and take a look at that shaft. Keep out of the automobile tracks. Every one of you follow behind me and don't do any walking around when you get over there."

The deputy led the way, swinging out to avoid the wheel tracks which Eve could see were fairly visible in the softer stretches of sand which the wind had blown in between the hard surface of desert-varnished rocks.

The tracks showed that a car had been driven almost to the edge of the shaft, then had turned, been backed so that the rear of the car was almost directly over the yawning pit. Then the car had been driven away at right angles to the route it had taken coming in.

"Sure looks like someone had dumped something heavy down this mining shaft," the deputy said. "Now, you folks stand right still. — Give me that big searchlight, Britt."

The big searchlight was pushed out over the mining shaft, the deputy lay on his stomach to peer down into the depths, then, wordlessly, got to his feet and dusted off his clothes.

"Well?" one of his associates asked.

"Something down there," the chief deputy said. "We've got to rig up a pulley, use the winch on the car, and somebody's got to go down."

The announcement was greeted with silence.

"Well," LeClaire said, "I'll volunteer if . . ."

"**You'll** do no such thing," the deputy said. "Right now, you're just as suspect as the girl is. We'll handle getting the evidence. You two go back to the car and sit down and wait."

"Suspect?" Eve exclaimed.

"Take it easy," LeClaire said. "The guy's only doing his duty." And then added after a moment, with a grin, "The way he sees it."

"I'm escorting you back to the car the same way we came," the deputy said. "We don't want any tracks obliterated."

"There are footprints **over** those tire tracks," LeClaire pointed out. "Some woman walked up to that shaft after the car had been there."

"You don't need to point out the obvious," the deputy said, irritably.

"**That's** a relief," Jon told him.

The deputy escorted them back to LeClaire's car. "You wait right here," he said.

Eve looked up the hill to the place where her tent had been pitched and which was now simply a charred, black oblong.

"Can I go up and see it there's anything left of my things?" she asked.

"Not yet," the deputy said. "Sit steady."

The deputy manipulated the county car up to within some twenty feet of the shaft, erected a frame and pulley over the shaft, attached a bosun's chair to the end of the cable which was on the winch and the front of the car. One of the deputies swung out over the shaft, then was lowered down into the black depths.

It seemed an interminable interval before the cable came up again. This time, the deputy was trailing a rope which was fastened to the cable and over the winch. Again, the winch started revolving and, eventually, a stiff, grotesque body came dangling up at the end of the rope.

It was some fifteen minutes before the deputy said to Eve, "Would you mind stepping over to the county car to see if you can make an identification of the dead man?"

"Why in the world should I be able to identify him?" Eve asked. "The only person I knew out here was my uncle and he went to the county seat. He's there now."

"I know," the deputy said. "But we'd like to have you take a look anyway."

Eve followed him to where the corpse lay. The blanket was pulled back, and then Eve recoiled with a horrified scream.

The stiff, grotesquely distorted body was that of her uncle.

Part Two will appear next month

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# NEW LA PAZ FERRY

by Cliff Cross

Invited to celebrate the initial crossing on Mexico's new government ferry from Mazatlan on Mexico's mainland to La Paz in Baja California, Cliff Cross gives his first-hand report to DESERT readers. Author of "Mexico by Auto, Camper and Trailer," Mr. Cross is well-known to Mexico travelers.



**M**EXICO'S NEW deluxe ferry, one of the finest in the world, is close to 350 feet long, carries 300 passengers, 115 autos and travels at 17 knots. It contains two dining rooms, a pool, lounge, bar and movie theatre. And it means that you can now travel the length of Baja California without having to return over the same primitive route.

There is also another advantage. Motorists headed for Mexico City can follow the nice highway # 15 along the west coast of Mexico as far as Mazatlan, ferry across the Gulf of California to La Paz, travel around the point of the peninsula and then return to the mainland of Mexico and continue their trip south.

But most Americans to appreciate this innovation will be Baja devotees with a time schedule that prohibits the slow, rough, two-way trip from border and back. Now they can drive one way through Baja and the other via the mainland on a paved highway. This will mean more miles for west coast residents, but less time in covering them, as well as a broader scope of our neighboring country.

For Mexicans, the ferry will give a boost to the La Paz economy through increased tourist travel and cheaper shipping. Loaded trucks drive on and off with ease, eliminating the time and cost of handling cargo the old way—off trucks into freighters and then back on trucks at destination.

Prices for shipping vehicles are established by length—the average car is between \$40 and \$45 one way; a pickup truck (with or without camper) between \$45 and \$50. Trailers are more.

Those who do not ship a vehicle may stay in hotels and use taxis, buses and air taxis available at La Paz for transportation. Taxis charge \$4 per load for the 11-mile ride from

the ferry landing to the town of La Paz, or a second class bus is available for six pesos (48c per person).

Second class buses charge \$1 from La Paz to Buena Vista, about 80 miles south of La Paz on the gulf—a rough but interesting trip not recommended for "fussy" travelers. (You might have to help push the bus to start it.) Several small villages are passed en route. Of particular interest is San Bartola, set in a beautiful canyon of palms and sugar cane. Taxis charge \$25 per load to Buena Vista and air taxis charge \$15 per person—minimum charge \$30 for the trip. Plane carries up to four people. There are two American-style resorts at Buena Vista that charge around \$13 per day with meals. Sports fishing boats are also available.

The traveler may continue by bus from Buena Vista to San Jose del Cabo for 80c, where there is a clean small hotel and restaurant that charges \$6 a day with meals (Casa o'Fisher), or a taxi may be taken to any one of three luxury resorts along the coast between San Jose and Cabo San Lucas. Taxis charge around \$12 round trip to Cabo San Lucas from San Jose. Plush hotels charge from \$20 per day with meals and sports

fishing boats are available from \$40 per day. Air taxis from La Paz also serve the three resorts in the Cabo San Lucas area and charge around \$40 a round trip per person. Other trips of interest from La Paz include Las Cruces, Todas Santos and perhaps Santo Domingo, an agricultural area.

The exclusive Las Cruces area is reached only by truck or air taxi. The road is rough and not recommended for passenger cars. It is around 25 miles from La Paz, if you're lucky enough to stay on the right road. Wealthy people who have homes in Las Cruces say the road looks good to them from 5000 feet, as they fly over it, and they hope it won't get better. Impassable roads keep areas exclusive. Many prominent people from the U. S. have winter homes in Las Cruces, among them Bing Crosby.

Reports since the inauguration of this new ferry testify to its success. More than 4000 people crossed the Gulf of California on it during its first month of operation. Schedules are dependable and improvements at both ports of call are constantly improving to accommodate the great influx of Americanos. ///

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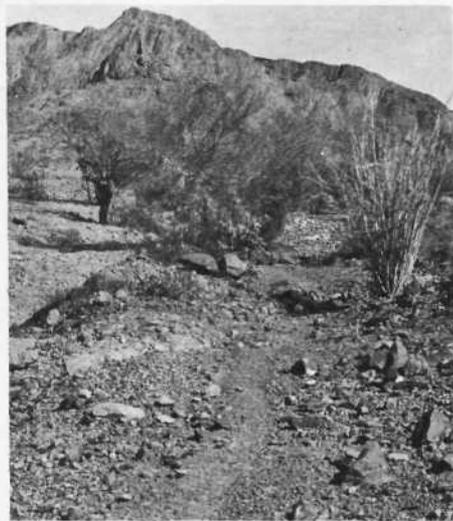
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*Path followed by Nummel between Red Cloud and La Fortuna.*



*Photo of deep, sand-filled pothole is deceptive due to direct sunlight.*



### NUMMEL'S GOLD

*(Continued from Page 27)*

over the rocky terrain eastward about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile into sector 15.

While Doug climbed into the wash to look for signs of a dirty yellow quartz ledge, Jean followed the trail northward along the right bank and I followed it south. At a point where my trail curved briefly into

the wash, I met Doug quizzically regarding a palo verde.

"How long do they live?" he asked. I didn't know then, and still haven't found the answer, but I do know that palo verde aren't generous with shade and grow only in relation to the amount of moisture they get. An uncultivated one large enough to shade Nummel some 65

years ago would probably have been old even then.

Beside the tree we were examining was the stump of another, twisted and half-buried under a boulder. Doug picked up a rock and knocked away sand that had collected between it and the wall of the wash.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

At the same moment a burst of victory echoed from Jean. Hardly knowing which way to run, I snapped a photo of Doug examining his dirty quartz ledge and then hastened up the wash to where Jean waited beside the deepest, most perfectly formed natural rock basin we'd seen in the country—certainly one that could have held water a number of months. Of further interest, it lay on a fork of the path about 200 yards from the cross-country one we'd identified as Nummel's trail to La Fortuna. While we exulted over her find, Fred signaled us from the helicopter and pointed to his watch and Doug appeared with his piece of dirty quartz. Unfortunately, it was barren of gold.

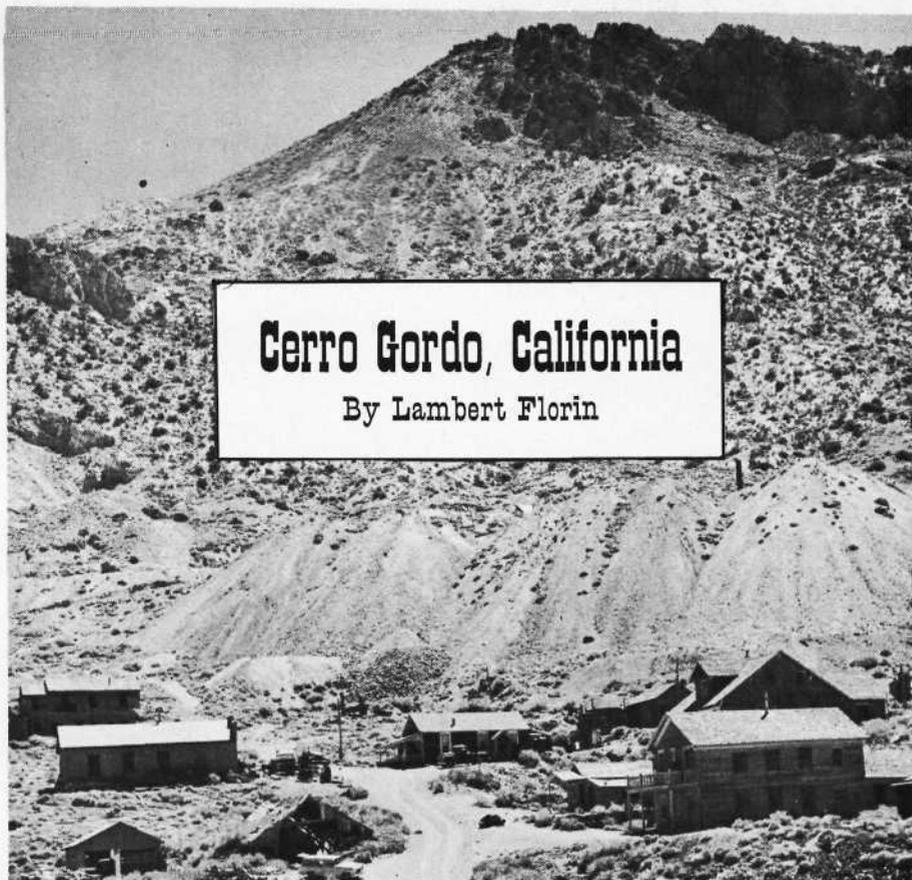
The most questionable aspect of the legend is the actual presence of gold at all. Both Red Cloud and Clip were rich with silver and lead, but, according to a letter from Frank Harris of Bard, California, a 70-year-old DESERT reader who has prospected this area for years, the most gold he's been able to assay from tailings of these two mines is \$1.40 per ton which, he says, isn't enough to get excited about. If there is any gold in the Trigos, he believes it must exist in colloidal form, as gravity will not concentrate it, although he has heard of a new process that might do better. However, the wash we now examined was not in the Trigos, like the Red Cloud and Clip. This was the Chocolate Range, only a few miles north of the rich Laguna placers—placers so rich that when construction workers impounded the Colorado to build Laguna Dam in 1907, they found nuggets and coarse gold in potholes 100 feet above the river.

To our knowledge, we were first to cover this area by helicopter in search of a lost mine. However, as in warfare, aircraft provides coverage, but it takes a land force to gain the objective. If the gold ledge exists at all, we're convinced it's about a mile below the pothole. Nummel drained the water from his canteen, remember, because he knew water could be had about a mile from where he rested.

Our search had to end at the peak of excitement, but perhaps a DESERT reader will finish the job and profit from our reconnaissance by air. ///



*Satisfied that second reconnaissance was successful, Gardner returns from quick investigation of Nummel's clues before Heller-Fairchild aircraft and crew depart from camp.*



## Cerro Gordo, California

By Lambert Florin

A monthly feature by the author of *Ghost Town Album*, *Ghost Town Trails*, *Western Ghost Towns* and *Western Ghost Town Shadows*

**A**LMOST AT THE very foot of towering Mount Whitney lies Owens Valley. Now mostly a blazing white expanse of salt deposits, the valley was once filled by a large lake, also called Owens. As the High Sierra borders the valley's western side, so does the Inyo range fringe the other border. Perched 9000 feet high in the eastern barrier is the ghost town of Cerro Gordo, the "Fat Hill" of Mexican miners.

For a couple of years after good deposits of lead and silver had been discovered at the lofty site, too much "manana" caused nothing much to happen. Then Mortimer Belshaw took over and the camp boomed. Belshaw had a good engineering background and knew how to get heavy machinery to the location, even

though block and tackle were necessary to hoist it up there.

At the same time a "road" was built, a narrow, twisting trail, made up of sudden switchbacks climbing 5000 feet in less than eight miles. As long mule trains hauled supplies up and ore down, trips were prearranged so that one would not meet another. In later years an aerial tramway was built to the mines to transport ore in large buckets along cables which hung like spider webs between crags.

By the end of 1868 Belshaw was shipping silver-lead bars at a fantastic rate. The bars were shaped like long loaves of bread, each weighing 85 pounds. After arrival at the bottom of the grades, the bars were unloaded and transported to Cartago aboard the Bessie Brady, one of two stern-

wheelers plying Owens Lake. There they were loaded on wagons for the trip across the Mojave desert and over the Tehachapis to San Pedro. Last stage was the ocean voyage to San Francisco where in a specially designed and built refinery, silver was separated from lead and sent to the mint. Lead went to shot-towers.

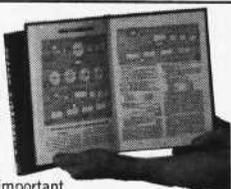
Cerro Gordo was famed for more than her silver. The red-light "section" infiltrated every part of town. The most imposing bordello was grandly titled "Waterfall, Gilded House of Pleasure." It still stands—the two story structure left of upper center in the photo. Only a little more circumspect was the American Hotel, also still standing, and seen at the lower right, with the portico in front. The hotel offered only one bath and a placard on the wall exhorted patrons to be sparing with water. This was understandable since that precious commodity had to be hauled up the grade from artesian wells in the valley. For drinking water, a small spring in the mountains provided amply as the population consumed little of the stuff.

The two best years for Cerro Gordo were '74 and '75. In '74 alone, the camp shipped some \$2,000,000 in silver-lead bullion. At the end of '75 the treasure showed signs of giving out. In December of '76 Belshaw shut down part of his operations and shortly after, when a bad fire destroyed essential buildings, got out entirely.

Several companies have since transfused new life into the camp; some succeeding in reviving it for several years. It was one of these which, in 1915, built the tram to expedite shipment of ore and bullion down the grade. But the raw material simply wasn't there any more—or at least in its former abundance. When the camp finally died, it stayed dead.

Cerro Gordo is a true ghost with only a caretaker and his wife living there. The unimproved road is negotiable by experienced mountain drivers, but is definitely not a boulevard for the timid. ///

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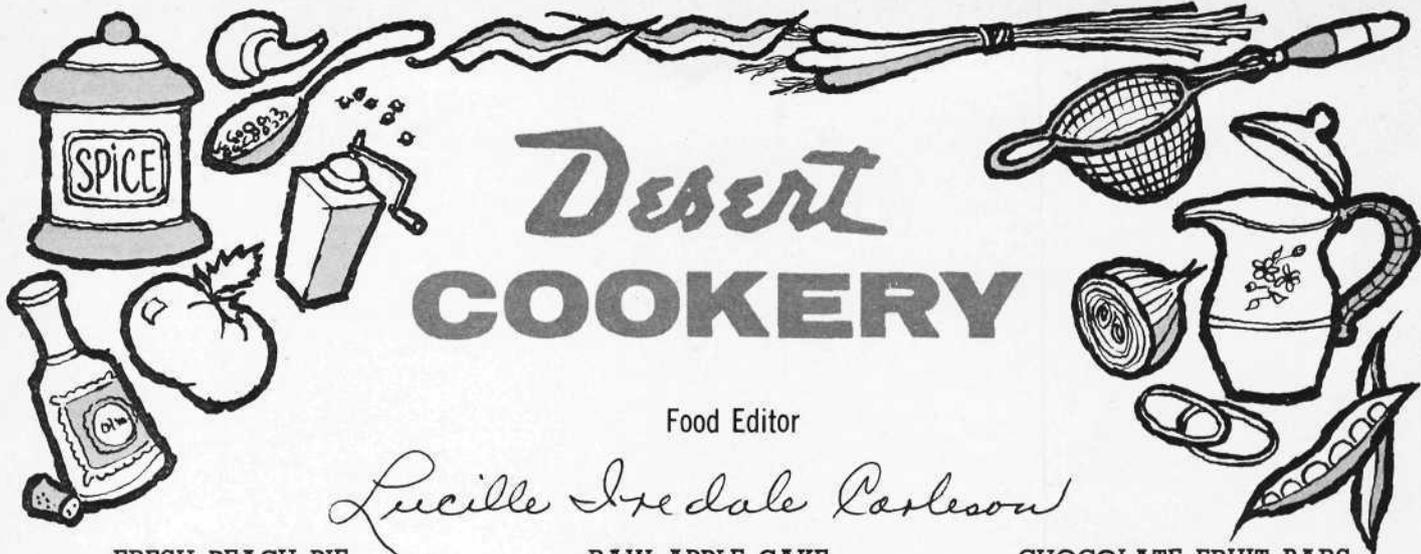
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# Desert COOKERY

Food Editor

*Lucille Iredale Carlsson*

## FRESH PEACH PIE

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons corn starch
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Pinch of salt
- 5 large peaches
- About 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 baked 9-inch pie shell

Combine 3/4 cups sugar, corn starch and water in sauce pan, stirring until cornstarch is dissolved. Blend in lemon juice, salt and 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg. Finely chop three of the peaches. Add these to the corn starch mixtures and bring to boiling point, reduce heat and simmer until it is thick and clear. Stir constantly during cooking period. Cool. Slice remaining peaches, arrange them on baked pie shell. Sprinkle with the 1/4 cup sugar. Spoon cooked mixture over top of sliced peaches. Refrigerate several hours before serving. Top with Imsweetened with sucaryl or with whipped cream.

## CHOCOLATE MARBLE DESSERT

- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 1 6-oz. package chocolate morsels
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows

Place in heavy pan over medium heat and stir until chocolate and marshmallows completely melt and mixture thickens. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Line 9x7x1 1/2 in. pan with vanilla wafers. Spoon 1/2 quart vanilla ice cream over wafers, then half the chocolate mixture and repeat, ending with chocolate. If so desired, you may sprinkle nuts over top. Put in freezing compartment for several hours or over night. Serves 8 or 10.

## RAW APPLE CAKE

This is a delicious cake and will keep fresh for days in your bread box. This recipe is for 4000 ft. altitude. If made at sea level, you should reduce flour by about 1/3 cup.

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup cold coffee
- 1 teaspoon soda dissolved in a little warm water
- 1/2 cup nuts
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup chopped apple
- 1/2 teaspoon each of cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon
- 2 cups flour

Mix all together and bake in loaf pan, which has been greased and floured, for 45 min. to an hour at 350 degrees. It is done when you can press it in the center with your finger and it springs back. It is not necessary to frost this cake, but if desired the following is a good icing.

## CARAMEL ICING

- 5 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons canned milk or cream
- 1 tablespoon butter

Bring to boil. Remove from stove and beat until half cool. Add powdered sugar until frosting is of spreading consistency.

## GLORIFIED BROWNIES

Bake brownies with packaged mix or your own recipe, adding 1/2 cup chopped nuts. When cold and cut in squares, split in half. Place a layer of vanilla ice cream between layers. Over top put a chocolate sauce.

## CHOCOLATE FRUIT BARS

- Sift together
- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt.

Beat 3 eggs until light. Gradually add 1 cup sugar and 1/2 teaspoon almond extract. Fold in dry ingredients. Fold in 1 6-oz. package semi-sweet chocolate pieces, 1 cup chopped dates, 1/2 cup candied cherries or well-drained maraschino cherries chopped and 1 cup chopped pecans. Spread dough evenly in greased oblong pan, 13 x 9 1/2 x 2. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes. When cool you may ice them. Cut into bars.

## PINK PARTY PIE

- 1 1/4 cup crushed pineapple
- 1 cup sugar

Bring to boil. Add 1 pkg. strawberry Jello. Cool. Put in a tray 1 can Foremost evaporated milk and freeze until crystals form on bottom. Whip and fold in Jello mixture. Fills two 9-in pre-baked pie shells. Keeps 3 days.

## STRAWBERRY PIE

- 1 9-inch baked pie shell
- 2 cups strawberries
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour

Put berries through sieve. To both pulp and juice add sugar and flour. Boil 10 minutes or until thickened, stirring. Cool. Mix 2 3-oz. packages of cream cheese with 1/2 cup heavy cream. Spread over pie shell. Put 2 cups whole strawberries over this. Pour cooked strawberries over this. You may top with whipped cream just before serving, or with Imsweetened with a little sucaryl stirred into it.

**W**E WERE MAKING a road for our 4-wheel drive equipment across a rough arroyo in Central Baja California called 'El Alambrado' when our friend, Ynez Romero, a Yaqui Indian, mashed the fingers of one hand between two giant boulders. While the other members of the party continued rolling the bigger rocks out of our proposed line of travel, I extricated a dusty first aid kit from the varied camp supplies that we regularly carry on an Erle Stanley Gardner ground expedition into Baja.

Ynez's index finger was badly split and his middle finger had been flattened with such force that it appeared as though an inner explosion had forced the raw flesh out through the ragged tears along both sides of the finger just below the nail.

Ynez Romero is a colorful Baja Californian who does everything with gusto, whether it's harpooning turtles, hunting mountain sheep or getting the FWD pickup he drove for us stuck in loose sand. So I knew instinctively before I examined his hand that he had smashed it with characteristic exuberance.

While I pondered the ample contents of the first aid kit—it was the size of a suitcase—wondering which of all the various items would do Ynez's finger the most good, he stopped jumping up and down and blowing on his fingers long enough

**A monthly series featuring the age-old uses of desert plants by primitive people everywhere.**

## DESERT DISPENSARY

by Sam Hicks

to tell me that all we needed from the box of fancy medical and surgical dressings was some gauze for bandaging. After the pain had subsided a little more, Ynez explained that what he wanted on his injured fingers were some slabs of Cardon.

I had a fleeting impulse to explain the superior disinfectant qualities of Merthiolate to him and argue that it was surely better than cactus meat hacked out of a Cardon by an unsterilized belt knife. But, on second thought, I shut my mouth and dutifully followed Ynez to the nearest Cardon. Under his direction, I peeled the spine and green bark away from a section of the plant's fluted surface and cut out a hand-size rectangle of the tough, white pulp. Ynez had me slice two thin wafers from the rectangle, wrap them around his mashed fingers, then bandage them with gauze and tape.

In camp that night he admitted that his fingers hurt a little, but by the next morning he insisted that all the pain had subsided and he continued to drive the pickup with his usual flair. After supper the following evening, Ynez reluctantly allowed us to remove the bandages, claiming there was no need to do so for another two or three days. His fingers emerged so startlingly white that they resembled a couple of dead fish. Ynez nodded approvingly at his mutilated "dedos" and asked us to please wrap them up again with the same Cardon and bandages. We compromised by cutting some fresh Cardon wafers and wrapping his fingers with new gauze and tape—but this time it was black electrician's tape because the moisture from the Cardon wafers kept loosening the other kind.

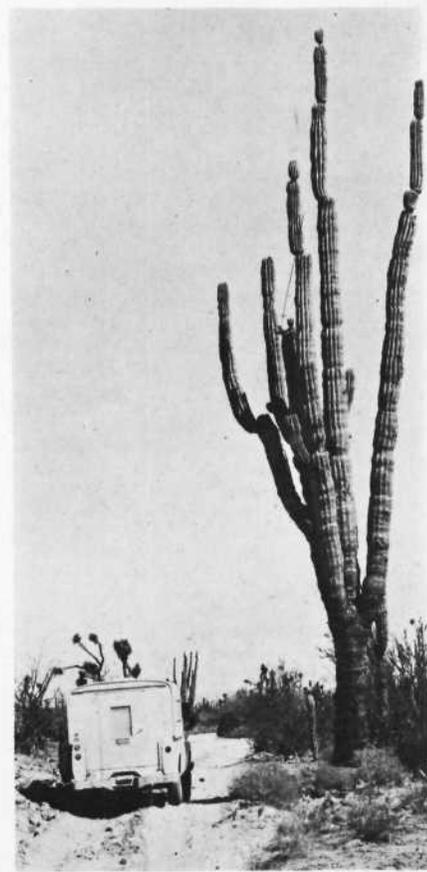
In a week, with no further attention, Ynez's fingers were completely well and, according to him, at no time during the healing process had they been sore. He was disgusted with us for being concerned and explained that the pulp of a Cardon not only has a built-in pain killer, but it contains a disinfectant and a powerful healing agent as well.

The dry wood from Cardon skeletons burns terrifically hot. At Mulege all of the baked adobe bricks and roof tiles used in the modern new Club Aereo were fired with wood from dead Cardons. The site of Don Jose Gorosave's Llanos de San Ignacio Rancho where the adobes and roof tiles were made is generously littered with stacks of crisp clay tiles that became so hot in the firing process they melted and ran together like glass in a furnace. When tapped with a stick, these misshapen clusters produce bell tones. The hard ribs from the skeletons of Cardons can be found on nearly every rancho in Baja where they are either tied together with rawhide or wire, or nailed to make corals, yard fences and the walls of buildings.

The ripe Cardon fruit is eaten with relish by both people and livestock. Hungry cattle rub against the trunks of the huge cactus to dislodge the fruit, then eat it as it hits the ground. A curious thing about Cardons is the fact that the drier the seasons become in Baja, the more plentiful and robust grows the fruit.

Smart campers in Baja study the conditions of nearby Cardons before rolling out their beds at night. Some times a heavy limb or, on occasion, a entire massive Cardon 50 feet long and weighing tons, will crash in a windstorm with a disconcerting thud!

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MAP DOWSING or waterwitching instruction pamphlet \$.50, also Field Dowsing instruction pamphlet \$.50, Discovering Dowsing Talent pamphlet, \$.25. Ray Willey, Crane P.O. Box 93, Schenectady, N. Y. 12303.

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TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS, western states. Stamp appreciated for each state index. "The Western Sport of Rattlesnake Hunting," book \$2 postpaid. Cutter Snake Bite Kit, \$2.50 postpaid. Campers Dri-Lite Foods, free list. Flint-Stick, 1000 fire, match, \$1 postpaid. Flint-Stick dealers wanted. Jacobsen Suppliers, 9322 California Ave., South Gate, California 90281.

## FORTITUDE

*The ground was hot, his skin was red,  
The sun was like a ball of fire  
Beating down on his weary head,  
His aching body began to tire.  
His lips were parched, his throat was dry,  
How long could he stand the sun?  
The thought of a cool drink brought a sigh,  
He felt the urge to run.  
He knew the end was drawing near,  
A voice called out, he made a moan,  
"Are you done mowing the lawn yet, dear?  
You're wanted on the telephone!"*

By MARILYNN OHL

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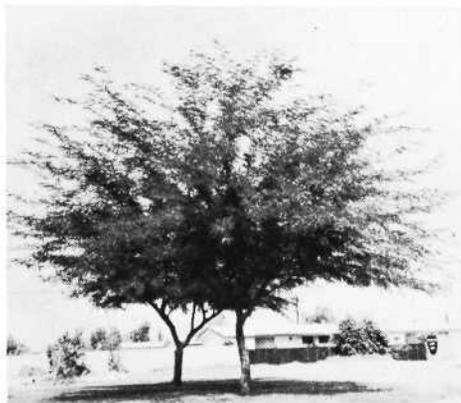
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## LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Letters requesting answers must include stamped self-addressed envelopes

### Happy Subscriber . . .

To the Editor: Your current copy of DESERT Magazine is a wonderful number. Perhaps I'm growing more indoctrinated with desert pictures and stories, but from the masterpiece on your front cover to the FWD advertisements that adorn the back page, I have enjoyed it immensely.

Especially did I like the Lost Pegleg Mine. I have never become even warm about mining, despite living in Colorado for years, and here in Siskiyou County, the past 34 winters—and late falls. But this man's story was so well planned, I wondered if it were true. Sounds too perfect. But he is a wise person to even think in such a pattern. I compliment him, either way.

J. O. MCKINNEY,  
Mount Shasta, California

### Too Many Phelps . . .

To the Editor: An article in your January issue about the Vulture Mine in Wickenburg stated that Phelps Dodge Corp. was the buyer whose refusal to pay more than the down payment caused Mr. Wickenburg to commit suicide. I find no record of Phelps Dodge Corp. acquiring any interest in this mine.

FRANK KNIGHT,  
Director Dept. Mineral Resources,  
Phoenix, Arizona.

Editor's comment: Reader Knight is correct. In 1866 Wickenburg sold 415 interest to Benjamin Phelps of Philadelphia. There was no connection between Phelps Dodge Corp. and Mr. Benjamin Phelps. C.P.

### Strange Trees . . .

To the Editor: At a place called Santa Claus and near Big Bear in California we saw an interesting grove of trees. Out of a single root cluster grow two trees—a sequoia and a ponderosa. This may be typical, but I've never seen it before and thought it would interest your readers. The trees, incidentally, are at least 100 years old.

NORMAN MUELLER,  
Pittsford, New York

### Water We Going to Do . . .

To the Editor: The Desert Magazine is a much appreciated and welcome addition to the reading matter that comes to our home. In your July '64 issue an article appeared explaining that a scientist in California had perfected a reverse osmosis system for purifying salty and brackish water. The article stated that an oil company in California had undertaken the manufacture of the equipment for this purpose. This city is interested in securing further information relative to this process. We would like to learn to what extent this can be adapted to a supply of water for our city. We would like equipment to purify about a million gallons daily. Our supply at present comes from deep artesian wells and while practically inexhaustible, contains a percentage of salts and iron that has been found objectionable.

CHAS. M. C. WOODLAND, Mayor,  
Redfield, South Dakota

Editor's comment: Your letter has been forwarded to Dr. Glen Haven who developed the process and we trust you will hear directly from his office. C.P.

### Lee's Lost Lode Located . . .

To the Editor: Please scratch one lost mine. The Lee Lost Lode as described in your January '65 issue has been found. This has not been publicized, other than in a few local newspaper articles which I have written. A man with whom I had made a few trips of exploration called me, about six years ago, to follow him to his new mine. He knew I had written about the Lee workings in my book of lost mines and wanted me to see it. There was a short extension of the scarred old arrastre post above the sand. Down in the wall of the gulch was the small tunnel in the manner of that period. He had even found a rusted metal box which was buried by a large bush and in it was a mass of wads of material. He sent this to the U. S. Treasury and was informed that it was the residue of gold certificate paper money, determined by chemical analysis, but unredeemable. The finder and present claim owner of this site does not go in for publicity. Visitors are definitely not invited and access is closed. Yes, the ore was gold and the place is "out from" Old Woman Springs. Evidence is conclusive that this is the site of the Lee Lode.

HOWARD D. CLARK,  
Yucca Valley, California

## Strange Tales . . .

*To the Editor:* The June '64 issue of DESERT had an article by Retta Ewers that suggested early German seamen may have landed on the shores of the ancient Cahuilla Sea. I have been working on pre-historic contacts between the Old and New Worlds and would be grateful to learn the source of Mrs. Ewers' information.

S. R. VARSHAVSKY,  
Geographic Society,  
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

*Editor's comment:* Retta Ewers found the legend of the 11th Century arrival of white men in Coachella Valley among some newspaper clippings in a scrapbook presented to her by a friend who is now 94-years old. The datelines were missing and the newspaper unidentified, but it was very old. Other information in the article came from an old Indian Chief of the Cabazons who told it to her brother. C.P.

## Answer to a Rocky Problem . . .

*To the Editor:* The rock structures inquired about on this page in the Feb. issue were fortifications erected by foot soldiers during World War II maneuvers. They may be found throughout the desert where soldiers trained for an African invasion. The rocks with desert varnish were deliberately placed on top to better conceal the above-ground fox holes.

ALTON DUKE,  
Yuma, Arizona.

## Rock Theory Fortified . . .

*To the Editor:* The rock forts a subscriber asked about in the Feb. Letters to the Editor are probably Papago shrines. For this information I am indebted to Dr. Fontana of the University of Arizona, who found similar rock mounds in central Sonora coastal regions several years ago.

J. MANSON,  
Nogales, Arizona

## Original Rock Hunters . . .

*To the Editor:* Regarding the rock forts by Kathleen Powers, they were used for hunting. Before Indians acquired horses, whole bands went after herds of game. A strong corral was made by placing piles of rocks short distances apart. A medicine man presented himself before the herd and by odd gestures invited the animals into the corral. If the wind was right, perhaps guided by curiosity, they came. When the animals were headed toward him, the shaman would disappear behind the rocks and two other Indians would have blankets and yell to frighten the herd toward the corral where other hunters would spear them down. The reason for the small strongholds was for protection against enraged, wounded animals.

WAYNE WALTON, SR.  
Archaeologist  
Springfield, Missouri

## Magazine of the West (Germany) . .

*To the Editor:* I thought you would be interested to learn that DESERT Magazine is being used by our son in the Archeology Department at Erlangen University in Nürnberg, West Germany.

CLEO DAVIS,  
Compton, California

## Other Black Nuggets . . .

*To the Editor:* I looked for the Pegleg gold 62 years ago and at various times have been shown two black nuggets, each having come from a different location. East of Ogilvy by the second to the last sand dune, two men found 10 pounds of the gold all in a little pile, evidently left by someone too tired to carry them further to where they could be sold. I saw one of these nuggets. It was nearly round and about as big as a marble.

The other was picked up by an American teamster who teamed with mules from Arispe to L.A., San Diego and San Bernardino. This man told his daughter, when she found the nuggets in an old trunk some 70 years later, that when he was teaming from Arispe across the desert there was a hill, and at the base of this there was water. They used to camp there to rest and water the mules. Near the spring were some rocks he used to throw at the mules of his 16-mule team. He saved them because they were unusually heavy, but it wasn't until his daughter became curious that they discovered they were black-coated gold. She took her father back to locate the hills, but after 60 years he was unable to identify the spot.

LEWIS RAWSON

*Editor's Note:* Mr. Rawson is a good friend of DESERT's and a veritable fountain of reliable desert history. We are printing this letter because of its interest in relation to the article about Pegleg gold in this issue. C.P.

## Letters to the Man Who Found Pegleg Gold . . .

Visitors coming to the DESERT Magazine office to see the nuggets on display often ask if they were found within the circled area of the map, or were they in the Chocolate Mountains? The manuscript has created a lot of excitement in our office and we wish to thank you for sending it to DESERT.

JACK PEPPER, Publisher

Large gold, small pebbles, but no boulders mentioned. This does not add up, and I have heard this description before. Perhaps you can explain how heavy gold got there in the absence of other heavy material.

JOE YOUNG,  
Calabasas, California

Your discovery of the legendary Pegleg gold has vindicated the faith of H. E. W. Wilson who wrote the story published in the early issue of DESERT referred to in your article in the March 1965 issue. Many times I tramped those hills with Wilson looking for signs he was certain would lead to discovery. Although he didn't achieve success himself, I often felt his search was an excuse to roam the desert he loved and he would have been saddened had he found it. He believed so strongly that others believed with him. Now that Pegleg's gold is found, it makes everything more believable. Such is the stuff that dreams are made of! However, what are we who believed with Wilson going to use now as an incentive to get back to our beloved desert? There must be another chapter to satisfy us thousands of believers.

H. M. (Barney) BARNES,  
Corona del Mar, California

*Editor's Note:* There is! See Southworth's article in this issue.

Congratulations! I am glad you found it for two reasons, namely that you are now independent and I won't be spending my hobby hunting time, shoe leather and tires trying to locate the Lost Pegleg Smith Mine.

Should I be so fortunate as to find a rich gold mine, I would use the money to establish a school-ranch for boys and girls ages 6-16 years. The ranch would have facilities for training children to labor and to like work. The training would include education of the hand, heart and mind. Children attending the school would learn the meaning of AMERICANISM. Should I have found the black gold, I would not stop at harvesting the surface nuggets, but would glean every grain down to bed rock and put every dollar earned into the above mentioned project.

After reading your report in DESERT Magazine I am of the belief that there are thousands of dollars worth of gold in "them thar hills" just waiting for someone to get down and dig. What do you think?

CHANCEFORD A. MOUNCE, M.D.,  
La Canada, California

Congratulations on making your find and commendations in handling the situation as you did. You state that you will answer any question or letter that is printed in DESERT Magazine, however, your article raises more questions than could be answered in a letter to the editor. I would like to have the privilege of meeting with you personally and confidentially to discuss what should be done to follow up your story. In order to remain "semi-anonymous," I am forwarding to the magazine a stamped addressed envelope to send me any reply you care to make. I hope that you will reply and make it possible for us to meet.

A. M. DAVIS,  
San Diego, California

I would like the finder of Pegleg's gold to comment on my article in this issue. Was there unusual igneous activity indicated near his find; was there water, or a dried-up spring; were there signs of Indian ceremonial activity?

JOHN SOUTHWORTH,  
Burbank, California

I have yet to see a metal detector that will detect a one-ounce nugget under two feet of anything, including feathers or polyfoam rubber. What kind did you use?

ALBERT CAMERON,  
San Diego, California

*Editor's comment:* This statement has been made by other visitors to DESERT's office where the Pegleg nuggets are on display. To satisfy ourselves, we buried a nugget about 4" underground and it registered on our Detron metal detector. It also registered when unburied. Metal detectors are geared to special purposes—some for detecting large mineral areas far underground; others for detecting small objects on the surface or buried only a foot or two underground, depending upon the size of the object. A tin can, for instance, will register when several feet underground whereas a 1-oz. nugget must be closer to the surface. A quantity of nuggets, however, would register considerably deeper. Anyone in the market for a detector should write to the various manufacturers who advertise in DESERT Magazine and find out specifically what each type is geared to detect. C.P.



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