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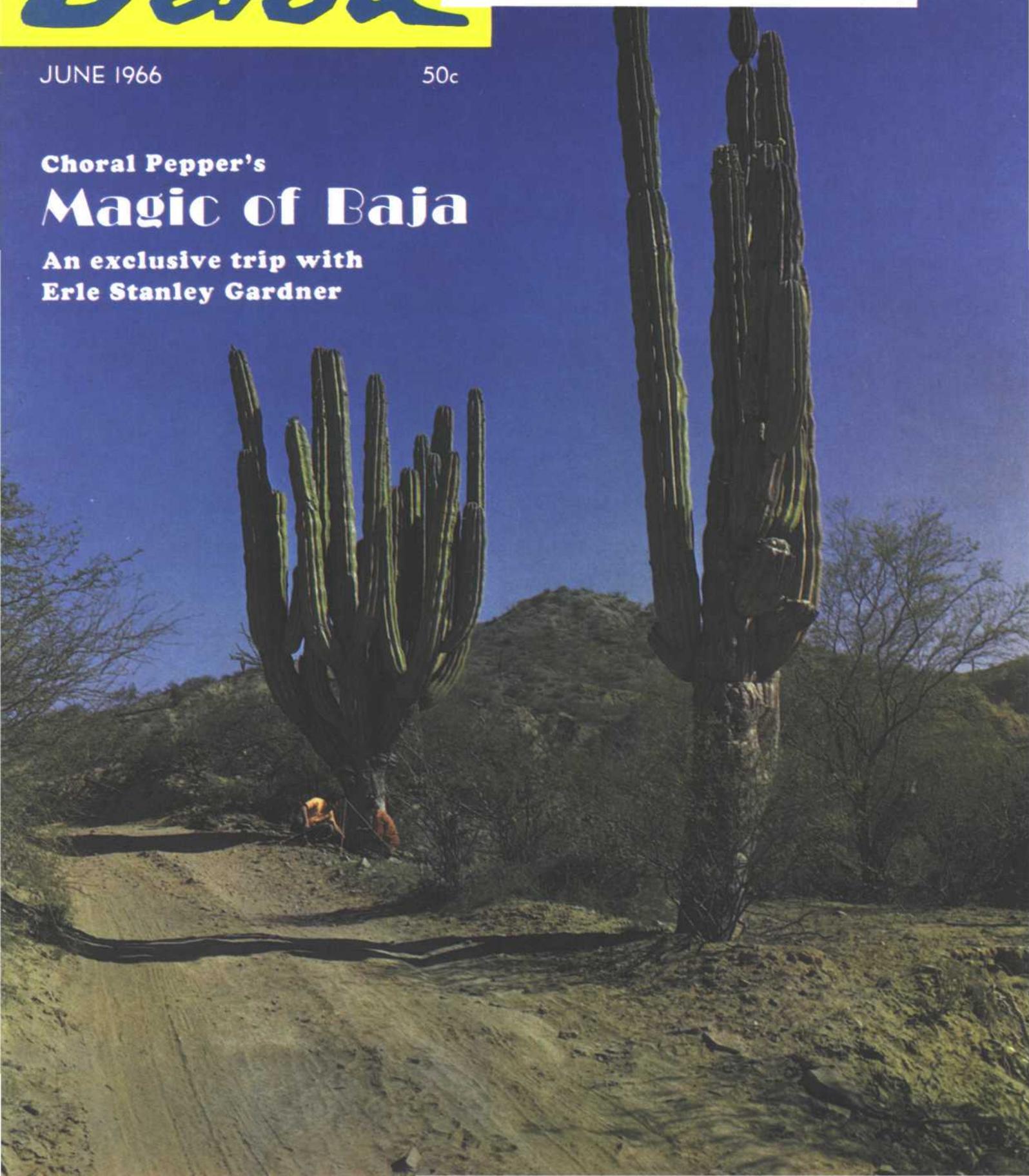
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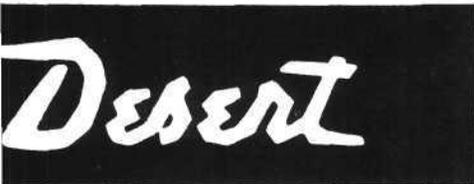
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# Calendar of Events

Home and Garden Show sponsored by the Desert Planters of Ridgecrest, Ridgecrest, Calif., June 3 and 4; Cactus and Succulent Society of America's Cactus and Succulent Show, Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, Arcadia, Calif., June 17, 18 and 19; Rodeo, Winslow, Arizona, June 18 and 19.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Some dates are subject to change. If you plan a trip to attend a specific event, we suggest checking first with the local Chamber of Commerce.

**EVENTS DEADLINE:** Information relative to forthcoming events in the West must be received **TWO MONTHS** prior to the event. Address envelopes to Events Editor, Desert Magazine, Palm Desert, California 92260.

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## New Books for Desert Readers

### SONORA SKETCHBOOK

By John W. Hilton

Good news for John Hilton fans is the revised re-edition of this outstanding book, first introduced in 1947. For several years in the '40s Hilton lived in the Spanish colonial silver-producing community of Alamos where he purchased and restored one of the beautiful old mansions. Since that time, Alamos has been made a national monument by the Mexican government and all restorations, by law, must retain the elegant architecture of the Spanish colonial period. Narrow streets are of cobblestone, the pace is slow, and Alamos is one of the most interesting and beautiful towns in Mexico. Many Americans have retired there and financed restorations.

But Hilton didn't confine himself to Alamos. He traveled by mule over the back country, collecting gemstones, studying the strange flora and fauna of the region, and making friends with colorful personages who traveled or lived on the ranches of Sonora.

Hilton is better known today as an artist, but his talent for telling a story even surpasses his talent for painting, in this reviewer's opinion, and it is with great enthusiasm that we recommend this book to readers interested in below-the-border adventure. Although much has changed in Sonora since it was written and the revised edition is little changed, it will still contribute in interest to trips made there today.

Illustrated with black and white sketches by Hilton, the book is hardcover, 333 pages. \$5.95.

### UTAH, A Guide to the Beehive State

By Ward J. Roylance

This is the only up-to-date Utah guidebook available and it is an excellent one. Illustrated with color and black-and-white photos, it covers facts about the state, a brief history, activities, touring by region, mileage charts, campgrounds and picnic areas, and excellent mapped routes to these places. If you plan a Utah vacation, check yourself out with this guidebook before you leave so you won't miss anything en route. Paperback, 206 pages, \$2.00.

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.

### TREASURY OF FRONTIER RELICS: A Collector's Guide

By Les Beitz

Here is a wonderful book filled with good photographs of all those "things" you find on the desert and wonder what they were used for in the "old days." It also tells you the value of a buffalo skull, or an old branding iron, or an oxbow stirrup, or of one of those statuettes of Buffalo Bill that was hawked by Indians at his Wild West shows.

Frontier Americana is still virgin territory for collectors, as the rising clubs of bottle-hunters can attest to, and here are suggestions which will put back-country wanderers on the ground floor as "collectors of tomorrow." Chapters cover relics of the roundup camp, the barnyard, miner's shack, gunsmith shop, frontier outpost, bunkhouse, hide hunter's camp, ranch house and saloon.

The book is written with enthusiasm and will be an inspiration to those who have more fun going out into the back-country when they have a goal. Hardcover, 246 pages. \$6.95.

### NATURE AND THE CAMPER

By Mary and William Hood

Here is a valuable book for campers, hunters, fishermen and hikers. Containing information about mammals, reptiles, birds, sea dwellers and insects, it tells which ones are dangerous, how to treat injuries from them, and what to do about hazards of the trail such as lightning, sun stroke, heat exhaustion, rock slides, snow blindness, etc. Illustrations by Don Perceval are excellent. Warnings are given to hikers who disregard warning signs of "Range cattle" and wander onto the bull's domain. This can be especially dangerous in country where there's no tree to climb! There is an excellent chapter on snakes, with good illustrations to help in identification, and for those who vacation

at the sea shore, there's a chapter on first aid for sting ray stings, and other sea monsters that spell danger. The Hoods did an excellent job on this book. Paper back, 157 pages, \$1.95.

**THE EXPLORERS  
TIME OF THE BELLS**

By Richard F. Pourade

These are not new books. They are Volumes One and Two of a planned series of the history of San Diego commissioned by James Copley of the Copley Press, but they are so worth having that this reviewer wants to bring them to the attention of DESERT readers.

*The Explorers* covers Cabrillo, the mystery man who died and was buried on San Miguel Island off the coast of California. Time has slowly revealed more of the background of this exciting explorer and it is told in this book. Included also are descriptions of the Indians found here and detailed maps of expeditions by Fr. Kino, Junipero Serra, Portola and others who made California history. Excellent drawings, photographs and reproductions of ancient records both from here and Spain enhance this large format, 203 page book.

*Time of the Bells* is about the mission period of Franciscan domination from 1769 to 1835, one of the most colorful

periods of California history when bold mountain men, Boston traders, Spanish dons and Padres shaped California. Fine maps illustrate the route of the old El Camino Real, Colorado Mission sites, Fr.

Palous map of missions, and numerous old Spanish trails. Again, fine colored paintings and photographs are reproduced and both books have an excellent chronology and bibliography. \$9.50 each.

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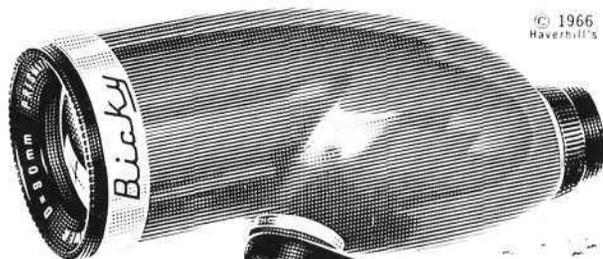
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# The Woodworking Wonder

by Bob and Jan Young

**T**WO DESERT woodpeckers, the Gila and the gilded flickers, nest within giant desert cactus. Because the saguaro would literally bleed to death by evaporation if the nest wound were left open, it secretes a fast-drying sap which rapidly forms into hard scar tissue. This process serves two purposes: It prevents further sap leakage from the plant, and it forms a hard-walled, gourd-like cavity which becomes a serviceable bird house.

But that's not all.

As planned, the woodpecker family uses the cavity as a temporary home for one season, then abandons it. In the years, perhaps a century, which follow, flycatchers, sparrow hawks, screech and elf owls, even purple martins, may use the same burrow as a nest.

In time, these skyscraper apartments die and fall. As the frailer flesh of the cactus melts away, there remains only a rack of ribs and the woodpecker nests, which have hardened and become impervious to the elements. Long ago the Pimas and Apaches learned that these shells made serviceable water jars. Modern collectors use them as bird boxes.

This bit of serendipity on the part of the woodpecker, nature's power drill, is not too unusual, since they were also responsible for controlling a heavy infestation of spruce beetles in Idaho not too long ago.

Woodpeckers, all 179 species, range through most of the world and more than 20 varieties make their homes in North America. Curiously, they all seem destined to control insect populations one way or another.

The giant of the clan, the pileated (which means "Capped" or "Crested"), rips through trees like a psychotic driller. The fragile, little downy woodpecker gently, but efficiently, cleans twigs and crevices of destructive caterpillars. Even on the ground, the flicker laps up ants and other insects like a housewife with a sticky broom.

The tongue of the woodpeckers is a wondrous thing. It is able to roll out and

recede, like those blowout favors youngsters use at parties. Some woodpeckers have tongues which resemble miniature harpoons or fish hooks. Since they measure four or five times the length of the bird's bill, they can flick in and out of insect galleries and impale fat grubs far out of reach of other winged insect harvesters. Another species has a coated, sticky tongue which it shoves into ant-infested areas. The ants, apparently be-

lieving it to be a threatening worm, rush to overwhelm it and become entangled in the fluid. The woodpecker then simply reels them back into its mouth. Another species drills a series of small holes into a tree to induce the flow of sap. This makes a living flypaper from which the bird takes an extra meal.

Bird experts believe that the woodpeckers locate insects by sound—sound so slight that the human ear can't detect it.



In one classic case, two brothers had their electric train set up in an attic. Not long after the boys began to play with the train, a woodpecker began pecking holes through the roof, arriving only in late afternoon to drill for a short time, then fly away. Nothing would discourage his efforts to pierce the roof. Nothing, until someone observed the correlation between the times the woodpecker worked and when the train transformers hummed, a sound which the bird mistook for insects of some kind. Changing location of the train corrected the situation.

While the woodpecker appears to have a mystic intelligence, this is not always the case. The California or Acorn woodpecker—the flashing, black-and-white fellow—is spared the hazards and discomfort of migration by collecting and storing acorns by the thousands. He carefully drills a hole, always the exact size of the nut in a tree, phone pole, or even in the side of a house and inserts an acorn, point first. It is hammered in until tightly wedged and flush with the surface. As many as 50,000 have been found pounded into the bark of one tree. (Naturally, squirrels, chipmunks, jays, etc., all harvest a share of these and this food reserve is probably responsible for saving many animals during severe winters.)

While this is an admirable practice, at least in one situation it might drive acorn woodpeckers to distraction. Occasionally, they select shingles or thin siding as their storage site. The correct hole is methodically drilled, but when the acorn is hammered into place it slips through the opening and drops into the interior of the building. Since the hole remains and the woodpecker feels obligated to fill it, he seeks out another acorn and repeats the process. The project is quit only when the bird finishes for that day and forgets to return.

It is one of the small wonders of nature that the woodpecker can deliver such repeated blows without shattering his own skull. In authenticated cases, the woodpecker has stunned a man with one determined blow. It seems that their skull bones are thicker than most birds and the various plates and sections are not only intricately cross-braced, but have a spongy tissue between them which absorbs most of the shock. His tail feathers are strong enough to act as a brace while he clamps onto a tree with his special claws, which work like old-fashioned ice tongs. His chisel-shaped bill can rip through wood at an incredible rate. Even though the pileated variety is as big as a crow, one has been observed to carpenter a hole his own

size in a dead sugar pine tree in less than 30 minutes!

Woodpeckers delight in drilling holes in utility poles, which cost at least \$500. Replacement costs have soared, despite frantic efforts to stop the ravages: repellants, metal, plastic and rubberized coatings, and even imitation snakes were fashioned from green hose and twined about the poles. The woodpeckers found these excellent perches while they sought elusive insects in the hearts of the poles. Red-flannel streamers were ripped up and used as nest liners. Metal whirlers and stuffed owls were treated with equal scorn. Even costly woods, the South American greenheart, was imported because it was three times as hard as domestic woods. But woodpeckers quickly reduced that to something akin to a wooden mesh.

Scientists are puzzled as to new approaches, since the woodpecker ignores live wood in the forest and concentrates on insect-infested portions of dead ones. Hence his value as an exterminator far outweighs any expense of his vandalism.

Like one disgusted, bewildered bird lover said, "Yep, he (the woodpecker) would have made a fine pet, except that danged bird was sure independent. When he didn't get his food right on time, he started to cut down the bird house."



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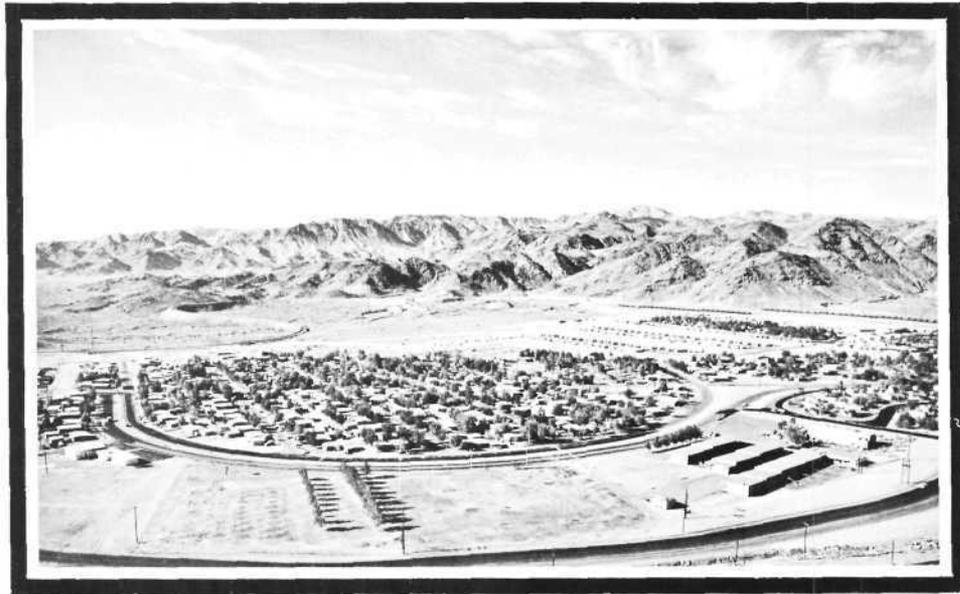
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# PELLETS, PEOPLE AND PETS

BY JACK DELANEY



ONCE UPON a time there was a village that was almost completely hidden from the outside world. In this village there was no unemployment, no vacant homes, no houses for sale, and a waiting list for the rental of every new home built. Though no handsome Prince roamed the streets with a *four-triple-A* glass slipper in his hand, and a glint in his eye, a beautiful Princess was definitely a part of the scene.

The above may read like a fairy tale, but it is not. Just change the time to the present, and picture the setting as a unique town known as Eagle Mountain, and every statement is true. This modern community of more than 3000 residents is what might be called a "Company" town, or a mining village, but it differs greatly from the popular conception of both. The Company, in this case, is Kaiser Steel Corporation, and the location of the town is adjacent to Kaiser's Eagle Mountain Iron Ore Mine—about midway between Indio and Blythe, California.

At present, there are 416 modern homes and 214 trailer spaces at Eagle Mountain to provide for the families and single men in the town. They are all owned by the Kaiser Corporation and are made available to the employees of the mine on an attractive rental basis. At least one member of each home is an employee of the Kaiser mine. If someone is

terminated from his job, he must give up his home—hence the statement that there is no unemployment in this town.

Manager Martin Hughes is responsible for the efficient operation of the mine and the pleasant living conditions provided for the employees. The community has paved streets, lighting, fire and police protection, television cable service, a post office, a recreation hall, swimming pool, tennis courts, and baseball diamonds—the last three are illuminated for night playing. In the modern shopping center are a bank, beauty salon, drug store, laundromat, restaurant, food market, and service station. A number of churches and adequate medical services provide for the spiritual and physical well-being of the residents.

The Eagle Mountain Iron Ore Mine is an important part of the fully integrated operation of Kaiser Steel Corporation. Since 1948, when the first shovel of ore was dug from the mine, Eagle Mountain has supplied 99% of the requirement of the steel plant at Fontana, more than 160 miles away. This is an open pit mine and the expansion is downward and outward. As the outer perimeter gets wider, the floor gets deeper. The ore reserve goes extremely deep. There is enough to build many battleships, many home appliances, and a few million can-openers.

The magic word at the mine is "pellet-

izing." This is a method, recently adopted, by which the natural ore containing about 40 to 45% iron is ground into a powder and reformed into high grade pellets of 65% iron content. As a result, a saving in transportation costs and greater efficiency at Kaiser's Fontana steel mill are realized.

With the start-up of pellet producing facilities, a new look has taken place at the mine. A complex of buildings and tanks from two stories to upwards of 12 stories, all interconnected by miles of conveyor belts, are tangible evidence of the march of progress. This system has brought a new look to some of the men's jobs also. Miners, who are usually thought to be diggers of shafts and tunnels, can now be seen watching instruments, pulling levers and pushing buttons.

Eagle Mountain's new pellet plant has been called the largest single unit of its kind in the world. It contains a furnace two-thirds the length of a football field; and it has a capacity of producing 2.2 million tons of iron ore pellets per year, for use in the blast furnaces at Fontana. The upgraded ore, in the form of marble-sized pellets, travels over Kaiser's own railroad on the first one-third of its journey to the steel mill. This 52-mile line is one of the longest privately owned rail links in the country.

Much has been written about the im-

pressive Eagle Mountain Mine, with a slight mention of the town. My observations were concentrated more on the people and pets than on the pellets. For information on the old days I contacted an old timer, Postmaster Gladys Ralph. (She insisted that the title, *Postmistress* is incorrect.) She is one of the oldest timers in the area—not in age, but in the fact that she was there when the action started.

A report of the California State Mineralogist, dated 1893, stated that rich placers had been discovered in the dry gulches of the Eagle Mountain region and that some very rich gold-bearing quartz was found there. With this in mind, I tried to lead Mrs. Ralph into the subject of the yellow metal and the part it played in the history of this area. I learned from her that most of the gold mining activity was in the Pinto Basin, a few miles northwest of the present town.

In answer to my question on the origin of the community's name, I was told that the highest peak in the area is called Bald Eagle Mountain and this was a favorite nesting place of bald eagles many years ago. The whole region below this high peak is now known as Eagle Mountain.

Today, the town is a melting pot of people from all parts of the world, though they do appear to have one thing in common—a mining background. Residents of this town include people from Peru, Rhodesia, Zambia, Labrador, Hawaii, and many points in the U.S. They all work together in the mine and enjoy life together in the village. There are no saloons, taverns, or go-go palaces here and, incidentally, there is no undertaker, funeral parlor, nor cemetery. Could it be possible that there is a correlation between these two situations?

Anyone who plans an afternoon visit to Eagle Mountain should be warned that he is likely to experience *the shot!* My initiation to it came while I was enjoying the annual Hobby Show in the Recreation Hall. About mid-afternoon, I was sipping a cup of coffee, admiring the exhibits of local talent, and chatting with Mrs. Newell, President of the Women's Club. Suddenly, a terrific blast shook the walls and bounced the concrete floor of the hall up and down. My thought was to let women and children out of the building first (I had read that brave men always do this), but nobody ran for the door. So, trying to appear nonchalant, I wiped the coffee from my shirt front and trousers and asked my hostess if the wall-to-wall rippling was usual. She smiled and said, "Oh, that was only *the shot!*"

Every day, between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m.,

a series of blast charges are set off simultaneously in the mine to break up a new section of rock for another day's workings. The resultant explosion is taken in stride by the residents. Even babies enjoying their afternoon naps are not disturbed, having lived with it since birth. Eagle Mountaineers are able to distinguish tourists from residents by simply observing their reaction to *the shot*. It is interesting to contemplate the suspense and confusion that would prevail if, someday, the explosion failed to occur.

Men, women, and children of Eagle Mountain realize that a happy home life is enhanced with pets. According to an unimpeachable dog lover, the town is fully enhanced! An opinion, from the same source, is that man's best friend outnumbers man here; and that *a boy and his dog* has become *a boy and his three dogs!* Every breed is represented, with a wide assortment of just plain garden variety pooches—anybody's garden, with no favoritism shown! (This is from an unimpeachable garden lover, who had a wistful look in her eye when she used the expression *dog-gone*.)

The location of Eagle Mountain places it in the category of "easy-one-day-trips"

for the Southern California resident or visitor. Directions from the lower desert area are: Drive east on Highway 60 to Desert Center, turn left a few hundred feet to the "Kaiser Mine" sign, then turn left again onto Riverside County road R2 about 12 miles to the town. Because of the altitude, 1400 feet above sea level, the temperature is several degrees cooler than it is on the lower desert.

If your visit is on a Saturday or Sunday, drive to the mine office and ask for the *week-end supervisor*. He will welcome you and see that you are given a conducted tour of the mine. After the tour you will be on your own to drive through the town and observe the living situation of the employees. Keep in mind that the community was started, on a small scale, only about 18 years ago. Since then it has grown in size and enthusiasm into an important center of iron production, family life, and recreational activity.

As pointed out in the second paragraph, this is not a fairy tale. You'll see no handsome Prince ringing doorbells, but if you are fortunate you may see the Princess. One thing is certain, you'll see a "hidden" village, in the land of the bald eagle, where pellets, people, and pets are living happily together ever after! □



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# Hidden Lichen Valley

by Helen Brown

AS YOU ROAM the desert, look for those smog-haters, the lowly lichens. Only a spring wild flowers display can surpass them in color. Yellow, orange, brown, chartreuse, blue, green, white, black, purple, and even pink splashes the sun-baked rocks with intricate designs. Besides enthralling you with beauty they will also provide you with sustenance should you become lost in the desert.

Lichens may be found almost anywhere, but one place, the Hidden Lichen Valley in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, contains a mysterious source of dampness which produces lichens of unusual size and brilliance. Not only is this small wash and its steep side canyons of interest to color photographers of plant

life, but, according to Park Naturalist Lyle K. Linch, there are caves in the area which should be explored, one big enough to shelter 50 bighorn sheep. When he visited it, he found signs this hidden refuge, almost in sight of the highway, had been used for years by sheep, coyotes and other wild animals.

To get to Hidden Lichen Valley, I parked my car at the national park area information sign on Highway 93-466 in Nevada seven miles east of Boulder City and just across the highway from the road that goes north to the Boulder Beach campground on Lake Mead. Take a canteen of water and your camera loaded with color film (the view of Lake Mead from the top is superb) and start up the

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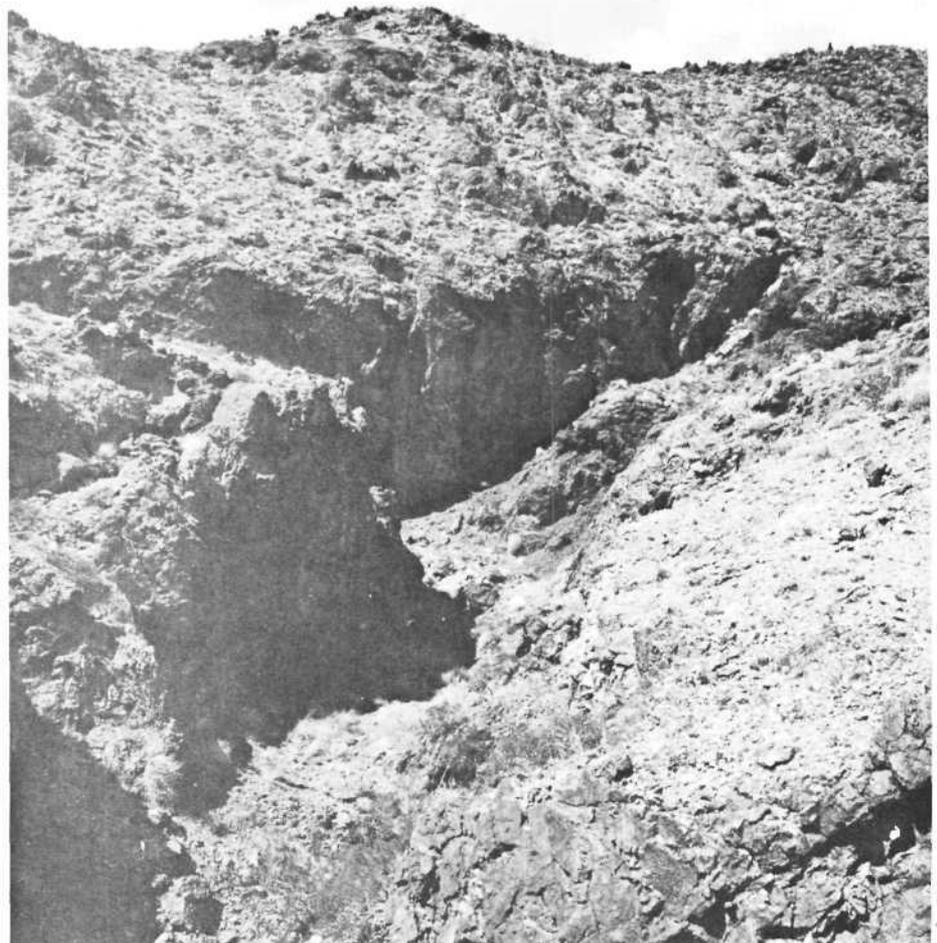
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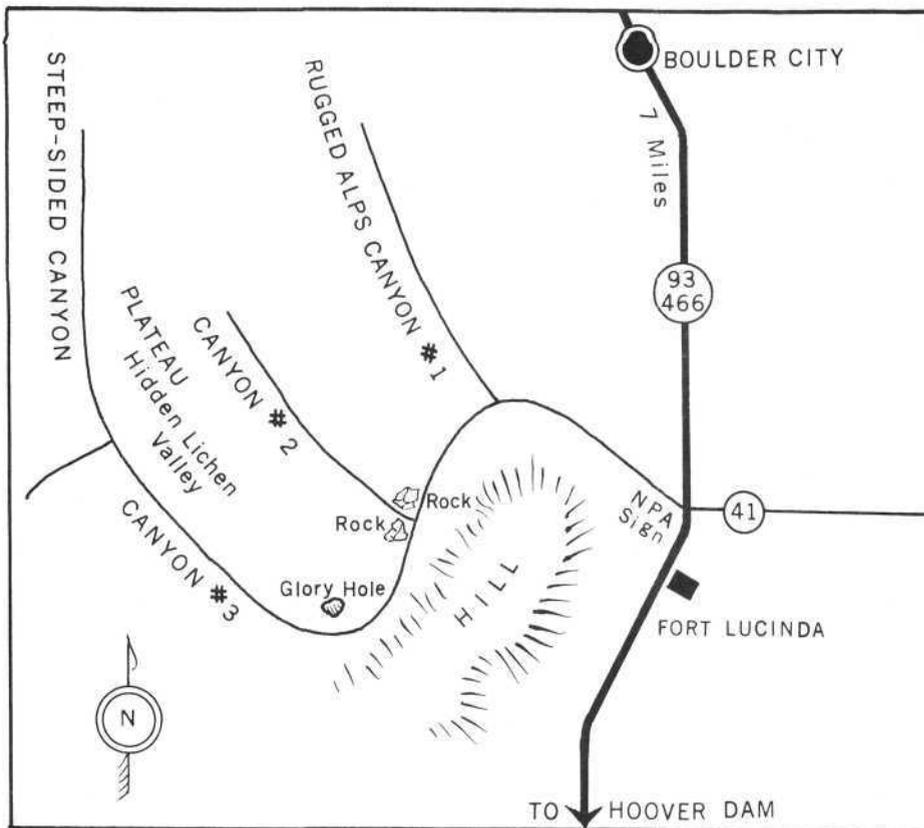
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\* This fish on display at Fish and Game Headquarters, Salt Lake City.





wash to the south. The rangers prefer that you do not go alone because of the steepness and loose rocks. In March, when I went up, I was unable to find anyone to go along, so I hiked alone.

As I wound around the hill on my left and passed Canyon No. 1, known as Rugged Alps Canyon, there were manganese-iron formations that colored the hillside with streaks of red. I continued up the wash about 1300 feet to Canyon No. 2 on my right. The mouth was flanked on each side by a huge boulder. Up at the ridge of the wash another 1400 feet was a prospector's old digging called Glory Hole. I continued across the ridge into Canyon No. 3 which Park Naturalist Linch described in his official report: "... After a drab 500 feet with a few lichens, this unimposing gorge opens into a fairyland of lichen-festooned boulders and walls. Another 1/8th mile up Hidden Lichen Valley brings you to the largest single and whole series of caves I have found at Lake Mead."

I was unable to go as far as he had gone, but at the top of Canyons 2 and 3 there was a small plateau. Here there were bushes of Mormon tea, creosote, catclaw, grass, and a barrel cactus or two. Through the plateau ran a narrow, steep brown canyon, as though a giant had slashed the earth with a jagged sword.

To the east is a Jeep road built by the power company to service power lines from Hoover Dam, but the road is closed

to tourists. Before I could properly explore the area and see the lichens and caves, I had already used up two of the three hours, after which I'd promised to return, so I went back by way of Canyon No. 2, which also has beautiful lichens.

Naturalists say desert animals nibble on lichens when nothing else is available. A lichen is not a real plant, but a chummy partnership of alga and fungus. The alga manufactures carbohydrates in the presence of air, water and sunlight. The fungus acts as an anchor for the alga against their both being washed away by water or blown away by wind. It holds the water for the use of the alga and provides the acid that breaks rocks into soil, thus releasing minerals for the alga's food. Various species live almost anywhere, but in the desert are found on rocks even in blazing sun. Lichen colonies exist for years, even centuries, without destruction and thrive where nothing else exists. In parts of Africa and Asia Minor they have been used to make bread. It is thought that the "manna" of the Bible was lichen.

One I tasted reminded me of a cheap breakfast cereal. When dry, it can be pried loose from rocks, but has a tendency to crumble. It could be pounded easily into flour and, with salt and a few drops of water, it would make a passable meal if cooked like a pancake on a hot rock. Anyway, keep lichens in mind, just in case your life depends on it for food some day. □

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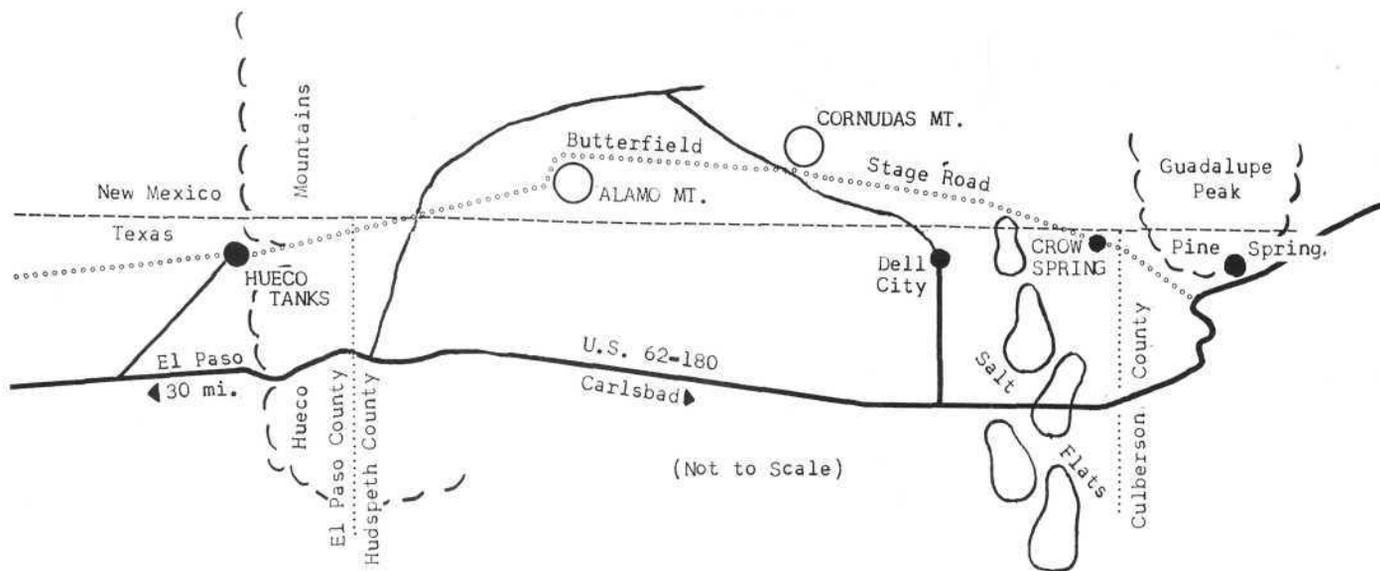
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## Along the Butterfield Trail

by Joe Parrish

"WOULD IT be all right if we went over to the old stage station to take some pictures?" I was addressing one of the owners of the Bennett Ranch.

"Do you have any guns?" he asked.

I assured him that my party, consisting of my wife and son, had no firearms.

"Well, I guess it's all right, if you'll be sure and close all the gates."

I thanked him and we proceeded along the rutted ranch road to the ruins of the Alamo Mountain station of the famed Butterfield Overland Mail stage line. This is one of the very, very few stations on the old route of which any trace remains.

We were attempting to follow a portion of the old northern route between El Paso and Horseshoe Crossing on the Pecos River. The Butterfield road was built in 1858 and the northern road was used from that year until 1860, when it was abandoned for the longer, but safer, southern route. The old road, however, continued to be used by travelers well into the 20th century, as it saved several days of travel time. This is the road we were retracing from El Paso east as far as the old Pine Spring station at the crest of Guadalupe Pass, some 100 miles distant.

The first stop east of El Paso was Hueco Tanks, about 30 miles away. Until shortly before World War II the old stage road was still in everyday use. Today, however, the sprawling El Paso International Airport and the vast reaches of

the Fort Bliss military reservation block the road and much of it has disappeared. Hueco Tanks is accessible from U.S. 62-180 via a dirt road.

Hueco Tanks is a water hole famous for years as a perpetual source of water. Although there are no springs, large natural hollows (*buecos*) catch run-off water and almost never go dry, even today. The tanks are in a strange granite protusion that rears 200 or more feet up out of the dusty beige desert and is visible for miles.

All early travelers stopped here and many inscribed their names on the red rocks. Still legible are names and dates as far back as 1848. Until a few years ago the name of the famed Western explorer, Captain Randolph Marcy, could be seen.

The tanks have been private property for years, but picnickers are allowed into the area for a fee. Vandals and weather have effaced most of the old inscriptions, but a few still are visible if you know where to look.

Indians, too, frequented the Tanks. Evidences of Basketmaker and later cultures abound, and even though the place has been picked over by generations of relic hunters, you can still pick up axe heads, arrow points and pottery shards after a rain. Formerly the rugged walls were resplendent with paintings and petroglyphs. Some survive today, including one painting of an enormous snake. Old documents claim that at one time there was a green painting here, the only green Indian painting known to archaeology, but there is no sign of it now.

El Paso County recently made a belated purchase of Hueco Tanks with the intention of making it a county park and there is currently talk of rebuilding the old Butterfield stage station as a museum.

The old stage road east of here stops at the barbed-wire fence of the Russell Menzies ranch, so we backtracked to Highway 62-180, following it east through Pow Wow Canyon of the Hueco Mountains to the crest, where an unnumbered, state-maintained dirt ranch road leads off to the northeast. About 10 miles up this road the stage trail intersects but is impassable east. It can be followed inside the Menzies property west back toward Hueco Tanks for a distance. The road actually is the original one built by the Butterfield people more than a century ago and is in amazingly good repair. They built well in those days. The Menzies ranch hands use it daily.

From here we headed on east to the next station, Alamo Mountain, some 30 miles distant. The state-maintained ranch road runs quite a distance north of Alamo Mountain and we had to enter the Bennett Ranch to reach it.

This station was built of flat slabs of rock from the mountain. The living quarters and rest room walls had no mortar. As a result, the outer corral walls have nearly disappeared. The walls of the old rooms, however, still are standing, as high as six feet in some places.

This was a well-fortified station. The outer walls measured 200 x 180 feet and surrounded the entire complex. An inner walled enclosure measured 56 x 68 feet. There were three rooms and a smithy, still

easily traceable. This building continued in use as a ranch house and line camp long after the stageline abandoned it in 1860.

A spring on the mountainside above the station used to produce fresh cool water, and the Butterfield contractors piped the water down to the station. The crumbling remains of the original tank are there. About 40 years ago someone tried to increase the spring's flow by enlarging the opening, but this had a reverse effect and today there is only moist earth where fresh water used to flow. Most of the giant cottonwood (*alamo*) trees that used to cluster around the spring are dead. Here, too, Indians and pioneers scribbled on the rocks, but not in such profusion as at Hueco Tanks . . . or at Cornudas Mountain, which we'll visit shortly.



*Above: Serpent pictograph of Hueco Tanks. Below: Ruins of Butterfield Stage Station.*

call The Billboard, contains hundreds of drawings, some superimposed over others.

Today the gates are padlocked and Cornudas Mountain is inaccessible. Perhaps it's just as well, for without supervision the paintings are subject to vandalism, although their remote location has kept them in remarkably good condition.

The next stage station east on the old road was the one at Crow Spring, on the north edge of the great salt flat that shimmers white and desolate at the foot of Guadalupe Peak, highest point in Texas. Between Cornudas and Crow Spring, the road dips into Texas, and Crow Spring is in the northeast corner of Hudspeth County.

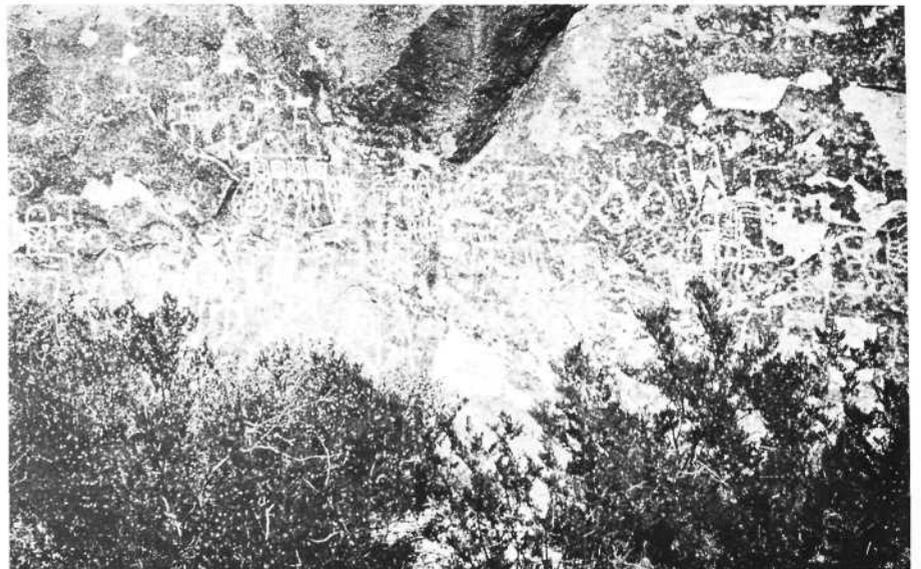
Early travelers reported that the stage road in the vicinity of Crow Spring wound through towering dunes of snow-white gyp sands of exactly the same composition as the famed White Sands of New Mexico. These are comparatively



*Below: Billboard petroglyphs of Cornudas Mountain.*

Twenty miles east of Alamo is Cornudas Mountain, site of the next stage stop. Nothing remains of the station here, but in the base of the mountain, in a "cave" formed by two huge boulders, is a mysterious well whose origins are lost in the mists of time. Known as "Thorn's Well," it was full of pure water when Lieutenant Bryan visited it in 1849. About four feet in diameter, it was lined with rocks and was about 10 or 12 feet deep. "Thorn's Well," is chiseled into the rock entrance in letters about three inches high. Who Thorn was, remains an enigma.

Here is one of the most magnificent, and least known, displays of Indian pictographs in the United States. The boulders around the bottom of Cornudas Mountain are, for a mile or more, covered with paintings and incised drawings of all descriptions. One rock, which I



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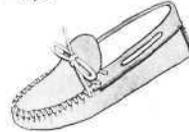
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small, however, and can only be reached with a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

The ranch road leads to Dell City, Texas, an irrigated farming district which takes you by surprise. An underground lake irrigates fields of cotton and other crops and it's quite a shock to burst upon this area, lush and green, after driving miles across the drab gray desert. The stage road here is completely obliterated and we could find no one who even knew where Crow Spring was—or is.

According to historian Conklin, the spring water was brackish and, although cattle drank it, a sulphur smell rendered



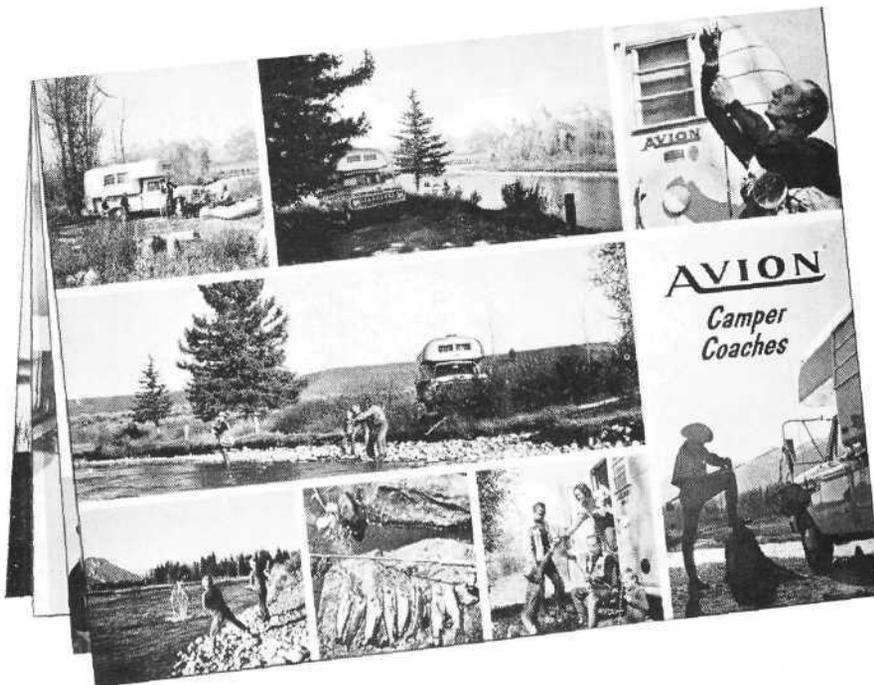
*Footprints are popular motif at Alamo Mt. site.*

it unpalatable for humans. The Butterfield dug a well a short distance away which gave better water. The stage station here was built of adobe and large blocks of gypsum, and in 1931, when Conklin visited the site, there was nothing left.

A paved road connects Dell City with U.S. 62-180. To reach the next stage station east, at Pine Spring, Texas, you must take the highway through the steep, but beautiful, Guadalupe Pass. Portions of the old stage road are visible where it clings to the side of the mountain. It was well graded and drained, and doubtless could be used even today.

Of the Pine Spring station, only one wall remains. Built of unmortared slabs of stone, it leans precariously and should be restored. Above us towered majestic Guadalupe Peak. In the slanting rays of the late afternoon sun, it turned orange and purple with the desert sunsets. A few miles north is little-known McKittrick Canyon where, in its bottom, a clear stream contains the only wild trout in the state of Texas. In the Guadalupe Mountains are, too, the state's only wild elk.

Reluctantly, we climbed back into our car to begin the drive back home to El Paso. We'd covered a lot of ground . . . seen a lot of history . . . and had a lot of fun. □



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# AVION

*Here's a surprising new slant on Pegleg*

## *Did Pegleg's Gold Belong to Peralta?*

*by Robert Buck*

A FORTUNE in black gold nuggets found in a remote area of Southern California's vast desert wasteland was claimed by an anonymous writer who told his story in the March, 1965, issue of *DESERT Magazine*. Is this the final chapter of a story which began more than 150 years earlier?

At the time the above story appeared, I was winding up several years of research on early California history to establish the origin of an ancient mine on top of an oak wooded hill on the south rim of the Calaveras River several miles upstream from Jenny Lind. While history credits the discovery of gold in California as

being found in a mill race at Sutter's mill by James Marshall in January, 1848, this ancient working provides proof that gold mining was carried out in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada many years prior to that discovery.

The old mine aroused my interest first because I wondered how it acquired its local name, Spanish Mine, and, secondly, because on my initial visit to it in the summer of 1939, I observed a huge white oak growing amidst the rubble which couldn't possibly have been there when the digging was done. White oak is a slow growing tree and this one measured 26 inches in diameter. By counting growth

rings of oaks of similar size, which had been cut, I determined this one to be from 110 to 125 years old.

A third reason for my interest was the discovery of a half-ounce gold nugget, part of which was covered with a black coating, which lay exposed where it had weathered out of the rubble of the dump.

Judging from the age of the tree, I placed the age of this mine in the early 1800's—long before the discovery of gold in California. Perhaps this truly was an old Spanish mine!

Researching California history from 1775 up to the time it became a part of the United States resulted in fascinating

*Looking down the canyon of the Calaveras from a point about two miles above Old Spanish Mine, which is on distant hill.*



bits and pieces which, when tied together, revealed more. The first in line in history pertaining to these Sierra Nevada foothills referred to an expedition led by Captain Fernando Rivera, commander of presidios, who traveled along this way in December, 1776, and named four rivers in the area—one of which was the Rio de la Pasion, since been determined to be the Calaveras.

The next mention of Spanish military in proximity to the Calaveras area is an account of a band of soldiers led by Luis Peralta in pursuit of a band of renegade Indians who had waylaid and attacked Padre Pedro de la Cueva from San Jose Mission while he, with three soldiers and some mission Indians, was visiting a village 10 miles east of the mission. One soldier and three Indians were killed. Peralta then pursued the renegades past the Rio San Joaquin, finally catching them. In the ensuing battle, 11 Indians were killed and 30 captured. This was in January, 1805.

History is indefinite as to how far across the San Joaquin this band of Indians was pursued, but food for thought is the manner in which the Rio de la Pasion was renamed the Calaveras. Calaveras is the Spanish word for "skulls," and early pioneers named this river "Calaveras" when they found several skulls along the lower reaches of the stream.

The interesting part about this bit of history, however, was the name Luis Peralta. Being familiar with western mining history, the Peralta family of Sonora, Mexico, came to my mind. This is the Peralta family credited with the discovery of fabulous gold mines which later became lost, one of them believed by many to be the Lost Dutchman in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona. But this was in later years than our story, so let's get on with it.

It was a warm summer evening and the sun was setting in the western horizon. Sargeant Luis Peralta sat on a boulder near the top of an oak wooded hill in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada of California. The year was 1806. He accompanied a party led by Ensign Gabriel Moraga, sent by the military governor of California to explore the inland area. The party had chosen this oak wooded hilltop on the south canyon rim of the Rio de la Pasion as a camping place because of the splendid view of the area to the west and north. Moraga made mention of this as he wrote in his diary that evening.

Luis was tall and leather skinned. His muscular frame and sparkling brown eyes

belied his age of 52 summers. Except for the graying of his hair and mustache, he would have been taken for a much younger man.

Having tethered their horses and pack animals and finished their evening meal, the group prepared to bed down for the night while Luis sat on a rock and gazed across the valley. His thoughts turned to his boyhood in far off Sonora and he wondered about the well-being of his only brother, Miguel, who was 11 years his junior. Recently he had received news of the death of their father. Miguel must be busy with the running of the rancho and mining enterprises which were now his to control. Luis must correspond with him, he determined. It had been over 30 years since he'd left the family hacienda to join De Anza's expedition to the north and subsequently been promoted to Sargeant and transferred to the San Francisco Presidio.

As Luis sat there reminiscing, he idly kicked the loose gravel at the base of the boulder with the toe of his boot. Noticing an odd looking black pebble, he examined it. Instinct told him this was no ordinary pebble; it was heavy and water worn. He removed his knife from its sheath and scratched it with the point. The black coating fell away and revealed a dull yellow metal. There was no doubt about it. He held in his hand a black-coated nugget of gold.

Scratching in the gravel exposed a few more black nuggets. His first impulse was to shout to his compadres; but, no, on second thought he decided to say nothing of it. Here was a potential bonanza.

He might be able to return sometime in the future and dig out a fortune. Concealing the nuggets in his pocket, he arose and wandered over the hilltop.

Here a freak deposit of water worn gravel crowned the entire top of the hill. Deposited in an ancient age, this had once been the bed of a mighty river. Upheaval of the earth's crust and erosion had left this piece of ancient river channel high and dry. Luis' eyes, as he wandered about the hilltop, visualized a fortune in black gold nuggets.

Through a restless night, he debated what he should do. By morning he had reached a decision. He would convey the news of this discovery to his brother, Miguel, in far away Sonora. Together they would mine these newly found riches.

Don Miguel Peralta sat on the patio of his hacienda in Sonora enjoying the cool of an early evening. It had been warm for late October and he was weary and troubled. The silver deposits which had produced so much wealth for his family appeared to be nearly depleted. He considered organizing a prospecting party to explore some of the wild desert areas to the north.

As Don Miguel pondered, a horse and rider appeared in the gathering dusk. As the rider drew near, Don Miguel could see both rider and horse showed signs of having traveled far. He bade the stranger welcome and offered the hospitality of his home.

The traveler drank from an olla which hung in the shade of the patio roof. "I have come from that country far to the



Looking to the east from top of hill near Jenny Lind. Arrow points to general area of Old Spanish Mine.

north which is called California," he said. "I seek one Don Miguel Peralta. I have news of his brother."

"Seek no further. I am Miguel Peralta. What can you tell me of my brother? I have not seen him for 30 years."

"This, Senor Luis asked me to put in your hands." The courier handed Don Miguel a letter and a small black coated nugget about an ounce in size.

Don Miguel anxiously opened the letter from his brother. It told of the exploratory missions, of the Indian skirmishes and of that great country called California. Then, in detail, Luis wrote of his discovery on the oak-covered hill beside the Rio de la Pasion. "Here is a fortune in gold," he wrote. Let us make plans to mine this discovery."

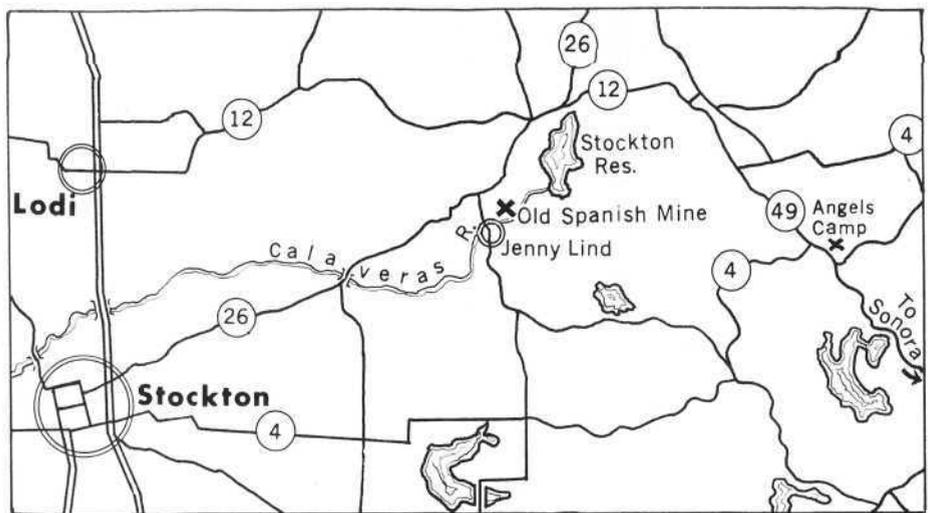
Don Miguel examined the black pebble he'd nearly forgotten in his anxiety to read the letter. Scraping away the black coating, he saw the yellow gleam of gold. But, how strange, he thought. He'd never before seen black gold.

"The bearer of this letter," wrote Luis, "I have taken into my confidence. Pedro was with our party when we made camp on the hill by the Rio de la Pasion and is familiar with the area. He will guide you to the place. Vaya con Dios."

Don Miguel immediately organized a party of his best men and outfitted them for the long journey north. In early spring of 1807, guided by Pedro, Don Miguel's caravan of miners and burros followed De Anza's trail of 1775. For days on end they plodded through miles and miles of cactus, sage and sand, grateful for the cool weather of late winter between watering places. Eventually they crossed the Tehachapi mountain range and fell down into the great inland valley of the Tulares (San Joaquin). After following along the Sierra Nevada foothills on the eastern side of the valley they at last reached the Rio de la Pasion and Moraga's camping place on the oak-wooded hill.

This great wilderness area seemed like paradise to Peralta's group of miners. Game was plentiful and wild grass provided good grazing for their burros. The stream of clear water which wound its way down the canyon was quite a contrast to the miles of desert they had crossed on the first part of their trip. Here Don Miguel set up the first mining camp in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. It was as Luis had said. Here gold nuggets, covered with a black coating, lay in abundance among the gravel on the hilltop.

Working the gravel dry with *bateas* and rawhide sheets, Peralta's miners separated the heavy nuggets and bagged them



in rawhide. The worked gravel was piled in hillocks around the crown of the hill, then they tunnelled under a volcanic cap on top and followed the bedrock in a manner described by modern miners as "coyote holing."

By late summer, the harvest of black gold nuggets was neatly sacked and ready for transport back to Sonora.

San Francisco Presidio, where Luis was stationed, was only two or three days travel to the west, so Don Miguel decided to see his brother before he returned home. "Pedro," he said to his guide, "you will take me to San Francisco. The black *oro* we will load on the burros and send homeward. If I make my visit short, we can overtake the caravan before it reaches home."

So it was that the caravan, with its gold laden packs, headed southward without Don Miguel or Pedro's guidance. And little did Peralta dream that the caravan and its golden cargo would never reach Sonora. For as it was, he found no sign of his caravan on his return trip and they had not yet arrived in Sonora when he returned to his family hacienda. Search parties were sent out, but all returned with the same story—the caravan loaded with black gold nuggets had vanished. It was never seen again.

About the year 1829 (some accounts say 1852) a trapper-trader named Smith, who'd acquired the nickname of Peg-leg, took a short cut from Yuma across the vast Colorado desert to Warner's ranch and became lost. Climbing a small black butte in order to re-orient himself, he noticed some small, heavy black pebbles strewn over the surface of the ground. Thinking they were copper, he filled his pockets. When later examination proved them to be black coated gold nuggets, the legend of Peg-leg's black gold was begun. Smith was never able to retrace his steps to the small black butte.

There were many doubters of Peg-leg's account. It just wasn't natural for gold to be deposited in this manner, strewn over the surface of a hill, they said. Gold is heavier than other minerals and rocks. When moved along a watercourse, it will seek the lowest level of the stream bed and remain on, or near, bedrock. No, water worn gold nuggets just aren't deposited on the surface of the ground!

Then came the recent DESERT story by the anonymous finder. While on a weekend outing in a remote section of the Colorado Desert in March of 1955, he found two small hills covered with black nuggets on or near the surface. Working quietly and secretly, he gathered a fortune over the next 10 years.

Reactions to his story were varied. Some congratulated him, others doubted the authenticity of his story. One reason for doubt, it appeared, was the description of the deposit itself—it just wasn't natural, they said, for gold to occur in this manner. But they overlooked the fact that the gold may have been scattered over these hills by some other means! Is it possible that this is what became of the cargo of the ill-fated Peralta expedition?

During the summer of 1939, I was led to the old Spanish Mine near the Calaveras River by two prospector friends who prefer to remain anonymous. This entailed a hike from the nearest access road, a camping spot called Silver Rapids, down the boulder-strewn canyon for about four miles. Here we crossed the river and climbed to the top of an oak-wooded hill on the south canyon rim. So overgrown with vegetation had the workings become that you could pass within a short distance and not notice them.

Small hillocks of gravel piled around the crown of the hill appeared to have

*Continued on page 33*

Was it true

## What they said about Joaquin Murieta?

by Robert Ramsey

I HAVE RECENTLY come upon information which leads me to believe that the famous California bandit, Joaquin Murieta, never really existed. The heroic "Robin Hood of the San Joaquin Valley" who robbed the gringo to help his people was born, not in Sonora, Mexico, as some claim, but in the futile imagination of an ex-newspaper writer. Nurtured by other enthusiastic journalists, Murieta has become the most mystery-shrouded figure in all California folklore.

Perhaps in those days there did live a poor vaquero bearing that name. But one man in his entire lifetime could neither be nor do all that has been attributed to the famed bandito who is said to have roamed the length and breadth of California between 1851 and 1853. This mysterious, ambiguous fellow, who could rob a man of his purse on the outskirts of Angeles Camp and at the same moment be reported 200 miles to the south driving off a herd of cattle in the Great Valley is a composite figure of many lives wrapped into one spell-binding legend.

Joseph Henry Jackson, in his introduction to *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, is a great help in exploding the Murieta Myth. Here he painstakingly traces the growth of this legend from a pamphlet written in 1854 by John Rollin Ridge through its various stages of literary development.

In 1859 an elaboration of the original theme, pirated from Ridge, appeared in the *California Police Gazette* as a true story. It was accompanied by the stirring illustrations of Charles Christian Nahl, which one may see in recent publications with the erroneous caption "Wells Fargo Wanted Poster." This story was extremely popular and soon other versions followed, including translations into Spanish. The Mexican people took Joaquin Murieta to their hearts as their own personal hero, adding their own touches to the growing legend which was returned to us with the Spanish rendition of Murieta's name.

The daring exploits of the young bandit crept early into history books. Today

you can't pick up a standard reference book on California without finding some part of the legend repeated. Usually it is prefaced with an explanation saying how difficult it is to sift fable from fact. The noted historians, Bancroft and Hittell, whose works were first published in 1880 and have been used as a guide ever since, accepted the Murieta legend as fact. In small footnotes at the bottom of the page, they quoted Ridge as their source of information.

A close look at the Mexican community of this period is needed to understand the conditions that fostered this legend. Because California was a Mexican province at the moment of gold discovery in 1848, Mexican miners were among the first to flock to the new gold fields. These were experienced miners. For the most part, they far out-numbered and out-produced the Yankees, particularly in the southern mines of Tuolumne County.

Then the United States won the Mexican War and many considered the Mexicans a conquered people. In the spring of 1850 the California legislature passed a statue called "The Foreign Miners Tax Law." This was an elaborate tax system that made it difficult for any but "native or natural born" citizens of the United States to mine gold. Under the heading of natural born, it seems, must have fallen the hundreds of German, French and English emigrants who flooded into the gold fields. Yet the latin-Americans, whose homeland was California, were excluded and forced to give up their claims.

Another factor contributed to the general unrest. During the Pastoral Age of California—the Spanish and Mexican Periods—the great ranchos supported hundreds of hangers-on. Every large rancho had family groups attached to it who had been there for generations, ostensibly workers, with actually little to do. By the time of the gold rush the great land grants were dissolving and thousands of vaguely employed Mexicans found themselves displaced persons. Some were able to find menial labor; others simply took what they needed as they could find it.

It became obvious during the winter of 1852 and the spring of 1853 that far too many Mexicans were living off so-

ciety. Some of these thieves were making an organized business of running cattle, robbing saloons and stores, stealing horses, and in general creating havoc. The leading newspapers called upon authorities to protect the citizens and demanded, in scolding editorials, "Something Must Be Done!"

Little appears to have been known about these bandits, except the most infamous among them all named Joaquin. Various reports listed at least five such Joaquins, surnamed Ocomorena, Valenzuela, Murieta, Bottilier or Botilleras, and Carrillo. No one knew whether these men were leaders of separate bands or members of the same gang.

The legislature moved into action in early 1853. The first proposal brought before it was that the state should offer a \$5000 reward for "Joaquin" dead or alive. Someone hastily pointed out that to set a price on the head of an individual who had been convicted of no crime was unbecoming to the dignity of the commonwealth. The proposal was officially dropped, although it has made its way into myth and been quoted as fact.

A short time later the legislature passed an act authorizing Harry Love to form a company of rangers of not more than 20 men, for a period of 90 days, in an effort to capture the bandits commanded by the five Joaquins, naming these separately. This act became law on May 11, 1853 and as an added incentive Governor Bigler personally offered a reward of \$1000 for any Joaquin killed or captured.

Captain Love and his men scoured the hills and valleys for clues to the whereabouts of the elusive bandits. Riding from one end of California to the other, they searched for over two months without success. On July 25th, at a point when their enlistment was almost up, a detachment of rangers came upon a party of Mexicans camped around a small fire along El Camino Viejo, the trail to the west of Tulare Lake.

Details of the ensuing gun-battle are vague. When the smoke cleared two of the Mexicans lay dead, two more died later, and the rest of the band had leaped to their horses, escaping in the darkness and confusion. The one who called himself their leader had given the rangers an argument and had been the first to die.

He was duly recognized as one of the Joaquins, the one by the name of Murieta, and his head cut off as evidence to back this claim. Preserved in a large jar of alcohol, it was later exhibited through-out the state. The second deadman was identified as a wanted thief and murderer by the name of Manuel Garcia, better known as "Three Fingered Jack". His head had been too badly damaged by a pistol-ball to save, so his mangled hand was severed and also carefully preserved.

It is to be noted that when the news got into print a few days after this incident, no surname was used. A careful survey of the newspaper files disclose no mention of an outlaw named Murieta.

In fact, the matter of Captain Love himself was hotly debated. Only he and his men had been authorized to go looking for the bandits; only they could have collected the governor's reward. By an act of the legislature their task was the capture of Carrillo, Valenzuela, Murieta or any other Joaquin. Obviously you can't collect a reward for an unnamed head; therefore, the head was identified as belonging to one of the Joaquins, namely Murieta. The reward was collected along with 90 days wages for 20 rangers and their captain. Later the legislature, stimulated by someone whose name is not recorded, voted an additional \$5000 reward for Captain Love and his rangers.

On August 23, 1853 the editor of the San Francisco *Alta* printed a story in which he called the whole affair a transparent humbug. He reported that a group of native Californians and Sonorans had started for the Tulare Valley for the purpose of running mustangs. Members of this party had returned and said they had been attacked by Americans who had killed four of their comrades and held the head of one as trophy. The editor also claimed that those who knew Murieta personally asserted that the head on exhibition in Stockton bore no resemblance to that individual. In his eyes it was all a hoax.

Such was the birth of the Murieta Legend. In this light it must also be assumed that the myriad tales of Murieta's treasures are fable. The fabulous treasure secreted in the Murder Cave on the Merced River; the wagon-load of stolen loot captured by the Indians in the Carrizo Wash; the tree with the large "X" which marks a fortune in Rawson Canyon; these stories may in part be based on obscure facts, but in the main, they are most likely non-existent.

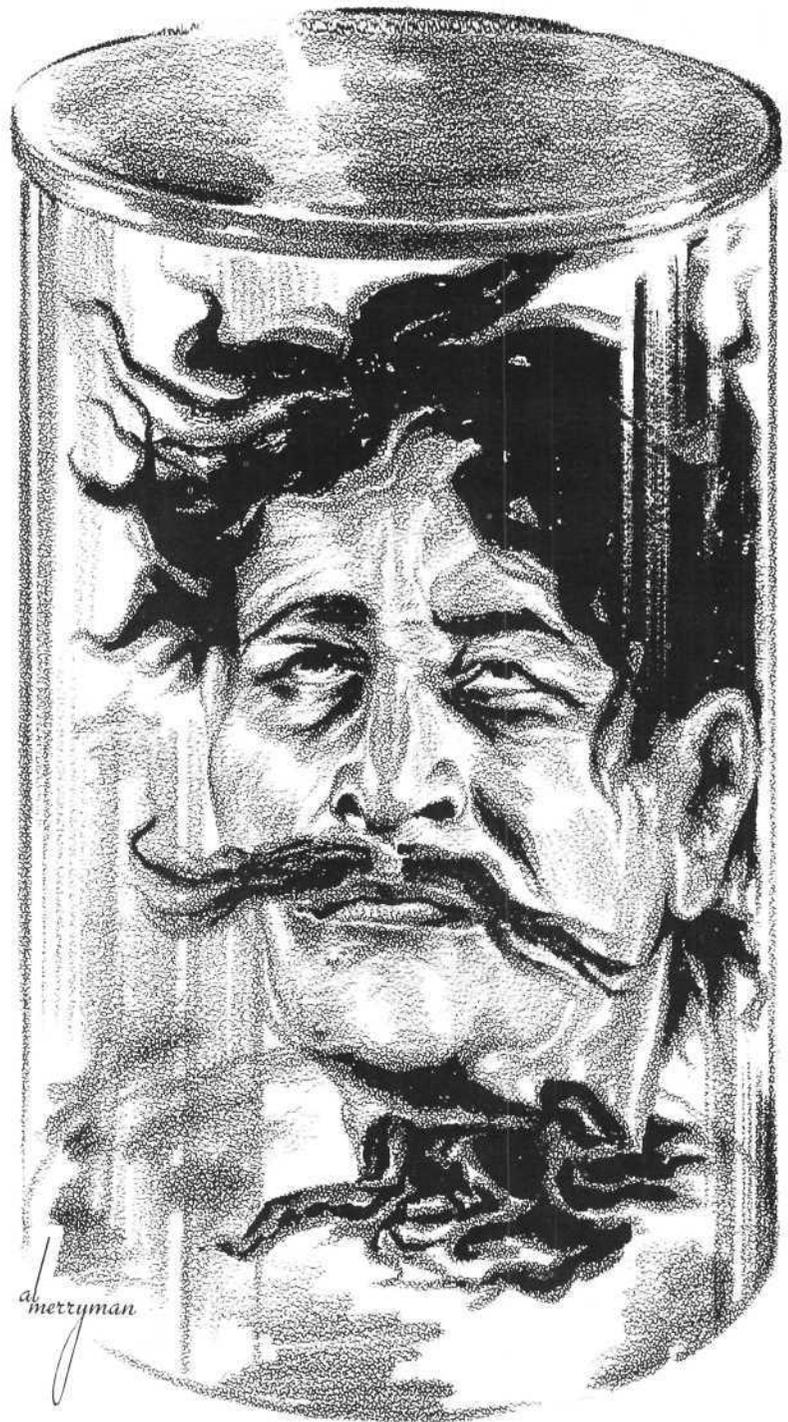
On second thought, there does really exist one Murieta Treasure. The original

edition of Ridge's work, which was mentioned before, first appeared in San Francisco in 1854. Its title page bore the name *Yellow Bird*, which was the Cherokee name of Ridge, a half-blooded Indian. So far only one copy of this original edition has turned up, sometime around 1932. It rests in the hands of a private collector, in Morristown, New Jersey.

Can you imagine the value of this unique 90 page affair covered in thin yellow paper? Other books this frail have survived. Where are the remainder of the

7000 copies Ridge claimed were published in a letter to his cousin in October of 1854? Rare book collectors have long pondered this question too.

When you seek Murieta's treasures, don't waste time walking the isolated desert or the high mountains. Search instead the bookstalls and basements for a dusty, battered copy of *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, published by W. B. Cooke, 1854—first edition. There, truly, is your buried treasure of Joaquin Murieta! □

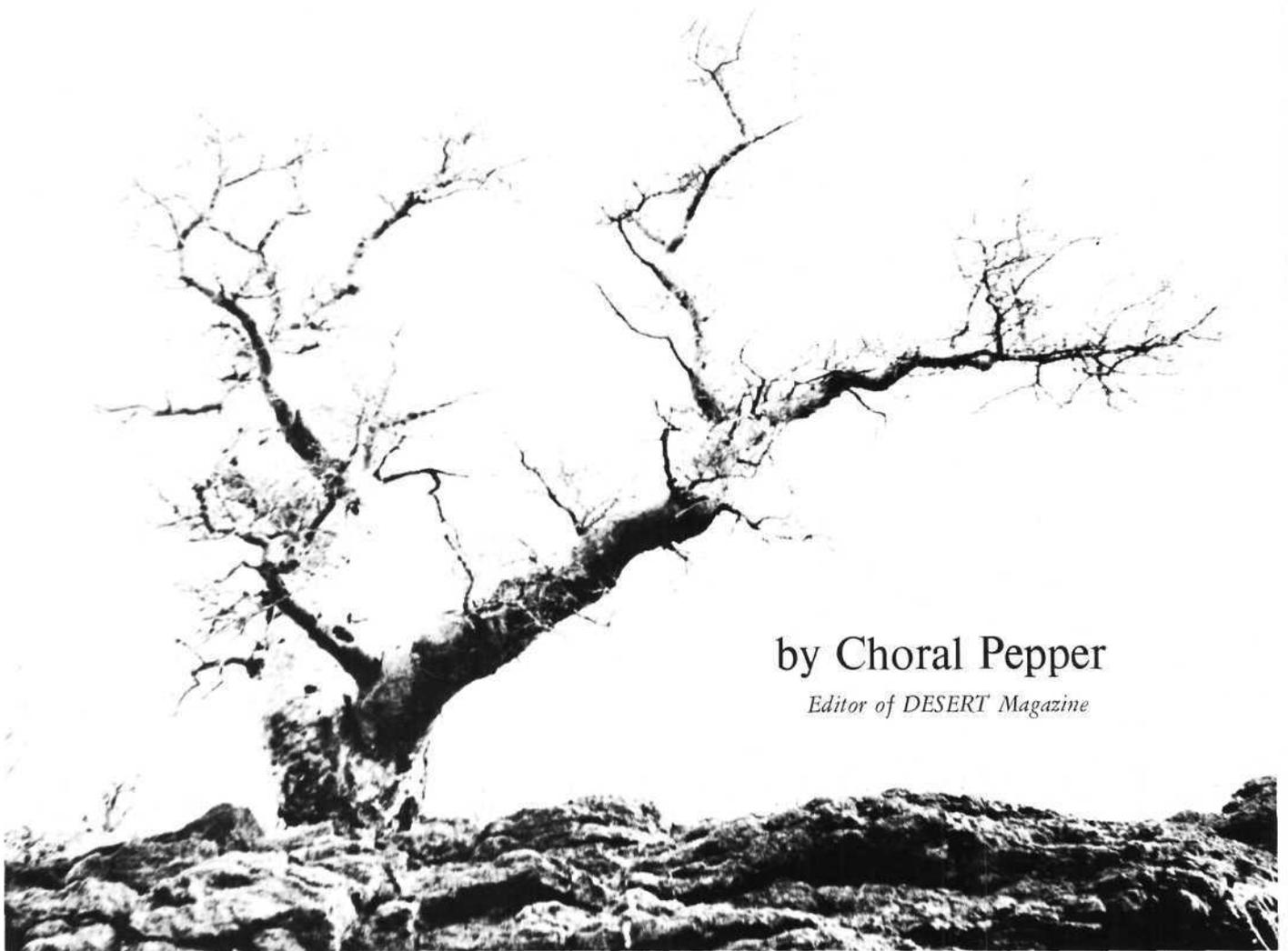


# On the Erle Stanley Gardner Expedition

we skimmed over land that has never known a human foot,  
we landed at primitive ranches that have never had a visitor,  
we hovered over terrain no tourist has ever seen, and  
we drove through country that has never known a wheel.

We did this with *helicopters*, with *Grasshoppers*, with *4-wheel-drives*  
and we discovered . . .

## The Magic of Baja



by Choral Pepper

*Editor of DESERT Magazine*

## Part One of Five Parts

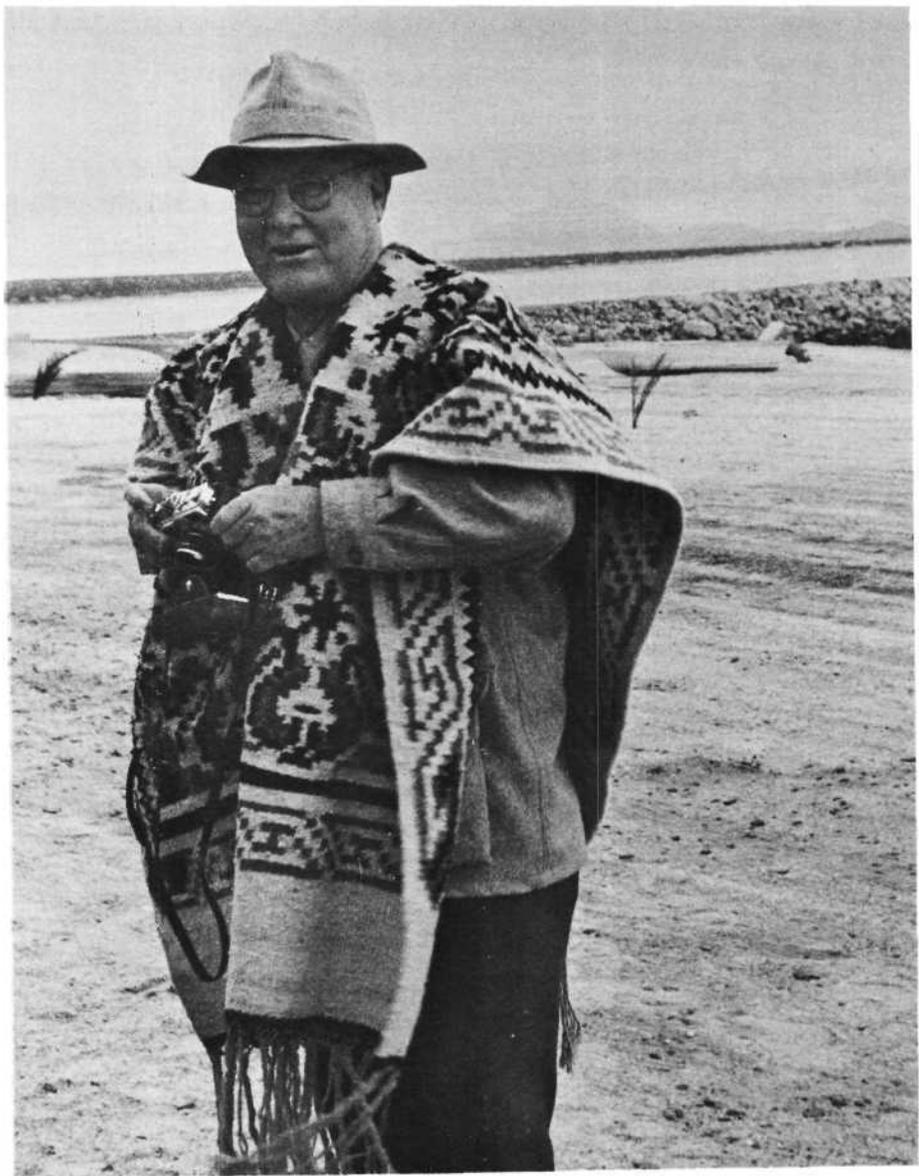
### BULLETIN TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE GARDNER BAJA EXPEDITION:

Plan to depart February 21st. In addition to usual complement of 4-wheel drive vehicles, we'll take three Grasshoppers. Two Fairchild Hiller helicopters will join party later. This is going to be an expedition to end all expeditions!

—ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

AT 5:00 A.M. I turned off the alarm and stumbled through the pre-dawn darkness of a strange room. Outside my guest cottage on the Gardner Temecula ranch, voices, motors and footsteps began to blend. I hurried into jeans and out into the cold air, pungent with leaf mold shed by huge oaks which spread a canopy between me and the purple dawn. A light glowed from the kitchen of the main house. I focused my flashlight along the path and headed toward it.

Breakfast was a sort of come-and-get-it affair. In the rear driveway Sam Hicks, Gardner's ranch foreman and right-hand man, was already stashing the last of our gear into the rear of a truck while J. W. Black, the mechanical genius who invented the Grasshopper and accompanies all Gardner expeditions, warmed up the engines of the vehicles. Uncle Erle bolted a glass of juice and rushed back to his office in a separate building to dictate last minute instructions on a tape recorder. Beautiful Jean Bethell, his executive secretary for many, many years, checked over lists to be sure she hadn't forgotten anything. Ricardo Castillo, our friend from Tijuana known to those who read Erle Stanley Gardner's adventure books, and Bruce Barron, a new addition to the Gardner crew from northern California,



*Uncle Erle at Bahia de Los Angeles wearing poncho presented to him by longtime friend Senora Diaz.*

studied a map to familiarize themselves with the route from Temecula to Mexico, where we planned to cross the border.

Others were scheduled to join us later, but there was one other member of our skeleton crew, George Yee. DESERT readers may remember George as the Mexican boy from Mulege whom we acquired as camp cook on an expedition in 1964 (DESERT May-Sept., '64). Now this handsome boy—half-Chinese and half-Mexican—is 21 years old and Uncle Erle had him flown up from Mulege so he could accompany our party from the beginning of the trip. It was George's first visit to the states and he was breathless with the magnanimity of it all. His father is chef at Club Aereo in Mulege, so George is experienced in culinary matters, but the Grasshoppers, the new yellow Ford bronco, the Toyota

station wagon and the two Ford pickup campers with 4-wheel drive had him dizzy with anticipation. He would be driving these vehicles. He would be flying in helicopters. And he would be King in our camp kitchen. I have never known a finer young man than George. Uncle Erle's faith in him was regally rewarded.

The business of crossing the border grows less complicated each year. Uncle Erle had arranged for auto insurance in advance and with all our papers in order, nothing detained us. It was early when we arrived at Augie's new motel in San Felipe, but we stayed overnight anyway in order to fortify ourselves with a fine dinner at Arnold's and do a little re-juggling with vehicles, tires and gear. San Felipe, where the pavement ends, always holds excitement for us. It's the Gulfside doorway to Baja adventure.

And adventure is what we were after. Although our expedition held a number of goals, plans for achieving them were loose. This is the only way. Those who demand mapped tours or pigeon-holed plans will never find adventure. On the

other hand, if you don't shoot for something, you're liable not to get started.

Our missions this trip were three-fold. Erle Stanley Gardner was seeking fresh material to complete another Baja California book. Then, although a competent

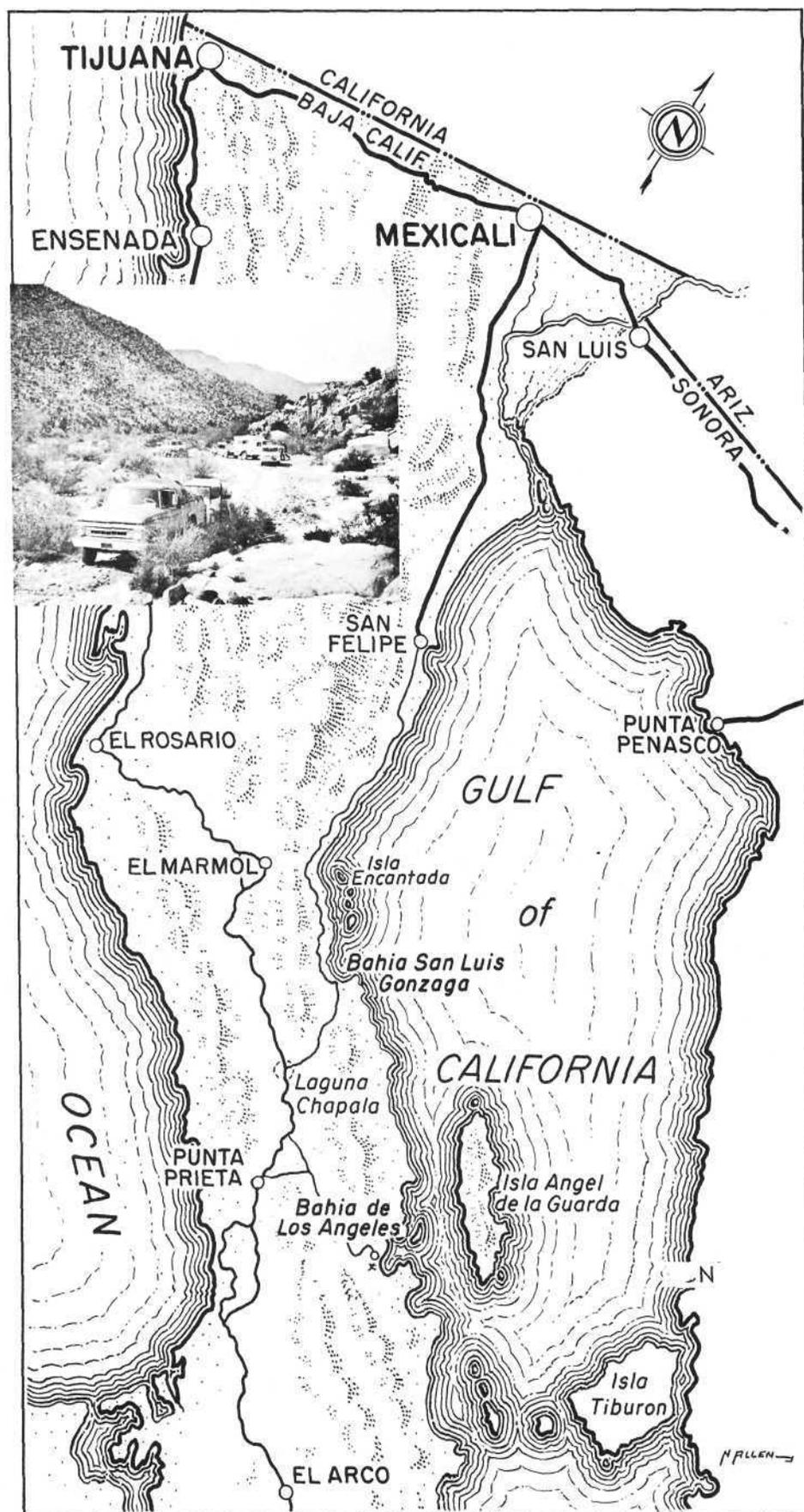
United States archeologist had accompanied an earlier expedition when Gardner discovered the famous painted caves he described in *Hidden Heart of Baja*, he now had arranged for Dr. Carlos Margain of the University of Mexico to meet us at a base camp near San Ignacio and visit these sites by helicopter. We intended, also, to examine first hand the serpent cave we missed seeing on our last trip (DESERT, August, 1964) and, of course, hoped to turn up some new ones. A third goal was to break a route through the unmapped country between Bahia de Los Angeles and El Barril. Chronologically, our third goal came first.

This unmapped country was not entirely new to the Gardner crew, however. In 1962 they studied it by air and then forced a trail through, all but carrying the cars. Following that, the Automobile Club launched an excursion to map the area, but after the first 22 miles turned back. "Impossible," their drivers said.

It had been a season of ravaging rains. If any part of the four-year old tracks were still evident, it would be surprising. On his earlier trip, Gardner hadn't time to explore, so now we hoped to establish a camp in the interior and work from it, using J. W. Black's Grasshoppers to reach places conventional vehicles could not navigate. Again, if there were water, its location was unknown. A vehicle breakdown, an accident, an emergency would go unaided. There were no air strips in the area; there were no known ranches. For four or five days we would be out of contact with the civilized world.

I tingled with excitement as we passed Arroyo Miramar, below Puertocitos, and proceeded into country new to me. Always before we'd flown over this route. I wished Jack, my husband, were with the expedition, but since he had business commitments which prevented his going on the trip, I felt delightfully guilty that it was I who bumped along the rocky road with the Gardner expedition.

Everyone writes about the roads. Actually, they aren't too bad if you're accustomed to back-country driving and willing to travel at a snail's pace. We like it. There's time to smell the aromatic twang of an elephant tree when a twig breaks against your car, or to photograph Palo Verde, garbed in green leotards and stretched like exotic dancers across the desert. Then, too, poking along gives you plenty of time to speculate about the fact that there are any roads here at all. Originally, of course, they were mule trails, adjoining links of the mission chain



which reached from the tip of the 750-mile long peninsula up to San Diego and beyond. Washouts frequently change the route, but a legion of volunteer Mexican roadworkers keep what there is intact. Along the way you'll see signs of their camps or, perhaps, a tin can on a rock indicating a spot where work stops and starts. Truck drivers provide these workers with food and water, but it's customary to leave a small donation in the can or give the worker cigarettes, should you meet him.

We stopped at Bahia de San Luis Gonzaga to say hello to Pappy Fernandez, proprietor of the fishing camp there. It's a primitive place on a beautiful bay where pelicans give the fishermen a lot of competition. Pappy had some kind of an infection on his neck and was doctoring it with a slab of Cardon cactus concealed under a bandage. He explained that it was important not to bathe for three weeks, due to this infirmity, and he yet had a few days to go. Sam Hicks, an authority on primitive curatives (his book is currently being published), was intensely interested in the remedy and after examining the infection, found that it was healing well.

Something new has been added to the peak above Gonzaga Bay. A *papier-mache* effigy of St. Luis hails boats passing into the harbor, a contribution from a visiting foreigner, Pappy informed us (a foreigner not being a gringo). It's a little hard to tell whether St. Luis is hoisting a magnum of champagne, pointing a gun, or hailing with a club, but it must be a comfort to sailors navigating this tricky harbor to know that once inside, with the tide out and their vessels entrenched in mud, they have St. Luis' blessing along with beer and vittles while awaiting a high tide to carry them back to sea.

As a neighborly gesture, Pappy often sends a fish via a friendly truck driver to a rancher several hours south along Highway No. 1. Because Gonzaga Bay is off the main route and recent rains had slowed down the trucking business, Pappy had been unable to deliver his fish. When he told Sam of this plight, Sam offered to make the delivery. It was a hot day and the fish was at least four feet long—a very big sea bass. Our pickup campers were filled to overflowing, as were the rear seats of the Toyota and the Bronco. The fish smelled exceedingly fishy. Each of us sidled off to a car and quickly revved the engines. Sam, trapped with the fish in his arms, looked perplexed. But he soon solved his problem. He wrapped the fish in



plastic and strapped it to the shelf of a Grasshopper he towed behind his own truck.

The country we passed into next was the cool granite country, unbelievably

beautiful with an elusive stream appearing and disappearing amid tumbled boulders along the canyon floor. A green succulent carpeted its banks and we stopped in a shady dell under a mesquite for



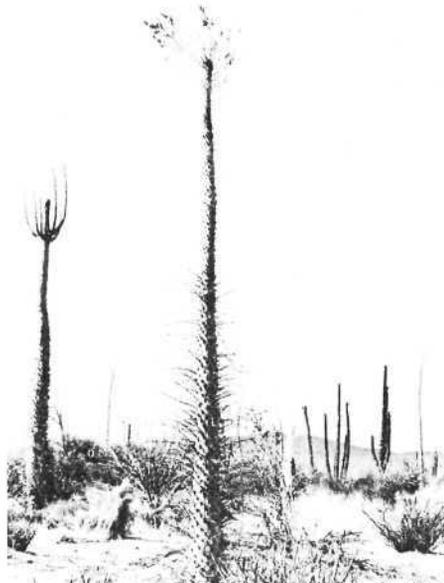
*The percussion instrument is original, but makes good music. These boys entertain nightly at resort.*

cool drinks. A little further and the terrain changed again. Rolling plains undulated into the horizon and everything was green. Cattle would have found plenty of fodder, but few had survived preceding years of drought. Their bleached carcasses looked pitiful strewn through the lush grass. At Juan Brossos' clean ranch, we delivered Pappy's fish and resisted an invitation to wait while he cooked it.

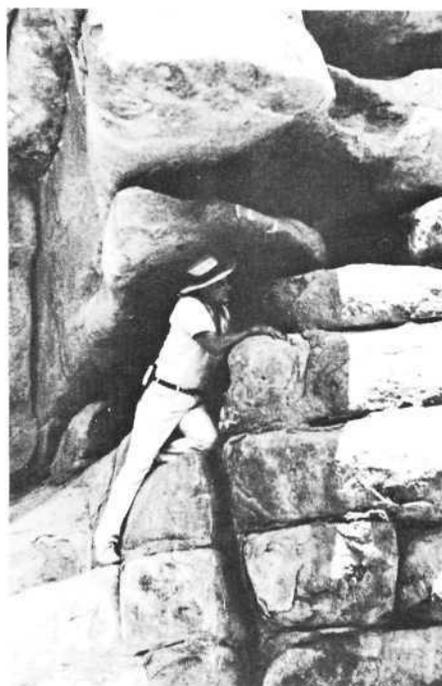
We had hoped to reach the resort at Bahia de los Angeles by evening, but I was pleased that photographic loitering changed our plans. Everything in this part of the desert is wacky. As J.W. said, "When the Lord got through creating the rest of the world, he flung the dough from his hands and it landed here." The cirio tree, growing like an upside-down carrot, is probably the queerest of the lot, but a phallic worshipper would lose his mind over the cardons. Here are the largest of their species, some at least 70 feet tall. Then, interspersed among the bizarre cirio, monstrous cardon and stalky elephant trees are the *Yucca valida*, a tree resembling the Joshua, and a jungle of crawling and clinging cacti and wildly flowering flora. Rare as it is, it's all natural . . . nothing contrived, wired or neon-lighted about it. As stars sparkled overhead and moonlight silhouetted the spectacular skyline, I found myself wondering if maybe *this* were reality, rather than the world I'd left behind. And, as I sit here writing about it, I wonder again.

Could you immerse yourself in this land of long shadows, magic air and enchanted skylines forever? Would its thorns and vast stretches of aridity keep out the superficial world? Or would familiarity break the spell? With time, would the peculiar "unreal reality" of Baja grow too real?

The following noon we arrived at Bahia de los Angeles. Antero Diaz and his wife, known as Mama Diaz to the gringos who visit this fishing resort, had accommodations for us in their new



*This is the only spot in the world where cirios are native.*



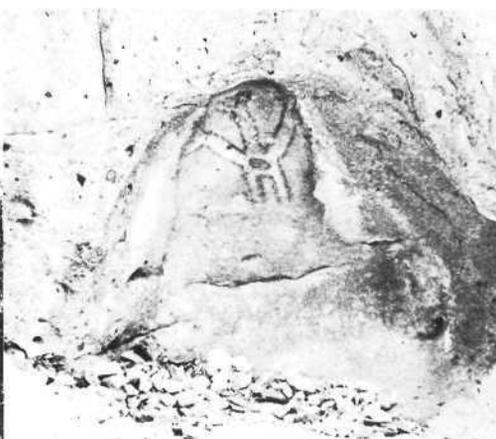
*Pictographs below were found on ceilings and side walls of cave shelters seen above. These are especially interesting because some of them contain a blue-green pigment, extremely rare.*

motel units—some of which have *hot* water; others have solar-heated water which on occasion is eluded by the sun. At this stage of the trip you'd prefer to die clean, if faced with a choice between a drink and a bath.

Jean Bethell and I spoke up for one of the hot water rooms and the men in our party shared the shower of another. Then we all appeared sparkling and shiny-faced for Mama Diaz' famous seafood lunch. Lunch somehow melded into dinner and as the moon arose we were being serenaded by a duo you just wouldn't believe.

In addition to a melodious guitar, there was a percussion instrument which consisted of a galvanized iron washtub, a common string, and a cut-off kitchen broom. The musician handled it like a bass viol and when he plucked the string, it gave out with a deep mellow tone. Both troubadours had fine voices and, when joined later by Antero Diaz, their music was hot enough to bounce the blood of a mute. They introduced a Mexican song new to us, *Para Morir Eguales*, which has something to do with a desire to die at the same time as your lover. I'm sure that had I a lover, I'd have been content to die at that very moment—full of lobster, adventure and the magic of Baja.

Probably the first white man to truly appreciate this scenic harbor protected by a barrage of small islands and a larger one named Angel de la Guarda, was a 17th century Spanish adventurer named Don Pedro Porter Cassanate. He received a good press for his colorful exploits, but, as with "professional characters" of today, when the final accounting came, it didn't add up to much. About 100 years after both Ulloa and Alarcon had reached the Colorado River's mouth, Porter made a splashy run for it. By the time he reached the Angel de la Guarda Island, however, his fleet encountered currents which menaced the vessels, so he headed into the protective harbor of Los Angeles



Bay, christening the islands which flanked the channel with the name *Salsipuedes*, which means, "Get out if you can!" After that he returned to the mainland to brag of his prowess.

The next contact with civilization came about 10 years later, in 1746, when Jesuit Padre Consag visited and named Bahia de los Angeles on an exploratory trip to the upper Gulf. He converted a large rancheria of fish eating Indians who lived along the shore and eventually the bay became an important supply point for the mission of San Borja, located about 20 miles inland. Much later, in the 1890s, the port was used as a shipping point for nearby Las Flores and Santa Marta ore mills.

With the Mexican Revolution, the American company which operated the San Juan silver mine went out of business and their people moved away, but the same revolution brought in an itinerant nudist colony from the Mexican mainland. These primitivists, for the most part office workers who, due to economic changes, found living *au naturel* desirable, established themselves on Smith Island, one of the headlands which projects into the bay. Eventually they moved on, however . . . or perhaps they just went back to clothes. At any rate, a small settlement has existed here ever since and today business centers around the fishing resort and turtle industry owned by Antero Diaz. Capitan Francisco Munoz of the Baja Air Service maintains a daily flight schedule from Tijuana and private planes usually stop for gas, meals, cold drinks or a few days of fishing. It's a popular, informal resort and accommodations are comfortable, although not luxurious.

Early inhabitants must have been happy here, too. There's a pure spring on the hill above the village, the mountains behind are bountiful with deer and bighorn sheep, and lobster, turtle, golden dolphin and hundreds of other kinds of sea and shell fish made living easy. And then, in early summer they indulged in their pitahaya orgies. This giant saguaro cactus resembles the cardon and thrives over most of Baja. In June, clusters of fat red fruit explode from its extremities and you can retrieve it by wiring a tin can to a dead saguaro rib and scooping the loosely attached blossoms from the spiny cactus arms into the can. The fruit's pulp is fluffy and sweet, like pink cotton carnival candy, and it's filled with soft, tasteless black seeds interspersed with soft, tasteless black ants. I have eaten of pitahaya, ants and all.

Prehistoric pictographs, brilliantly painted in red, black, ochre and white, are neatly inscribed on ceilings and side-walls of sheltering caves a few miles back from the sea. Most of their patterns are small and angular, like designs found on Indian pottery and baskets. I feel they were the products of a leisure enjoyed by these people who probably rested in the caves to escape the high noon sun. They have nothing in common with the petroglyphs near Coyote Bay further south (DESERT, June 1964), nor with the giant cave paintings of the San Francisco area we were to visit later.

Along the south shore of Bahia de los Angeles we found kitchen middens containing mounds of ancient shells. Stone implements and arrow heads lie among them, but we wanted to take a quick run up the north shore to La Gringa, so didn't take time to examine the middens seriously.

La Gringa interested me for future reference because it's a choice spot for skin divers. Here the water is cold and silvery clear. *Hacha* clams make humps in the sand and oyster shells provide retreats for multitudes of colorful, tropical fish. It's

*Antero Diaz has unique bookkeeping system. Guests bill themselves.*



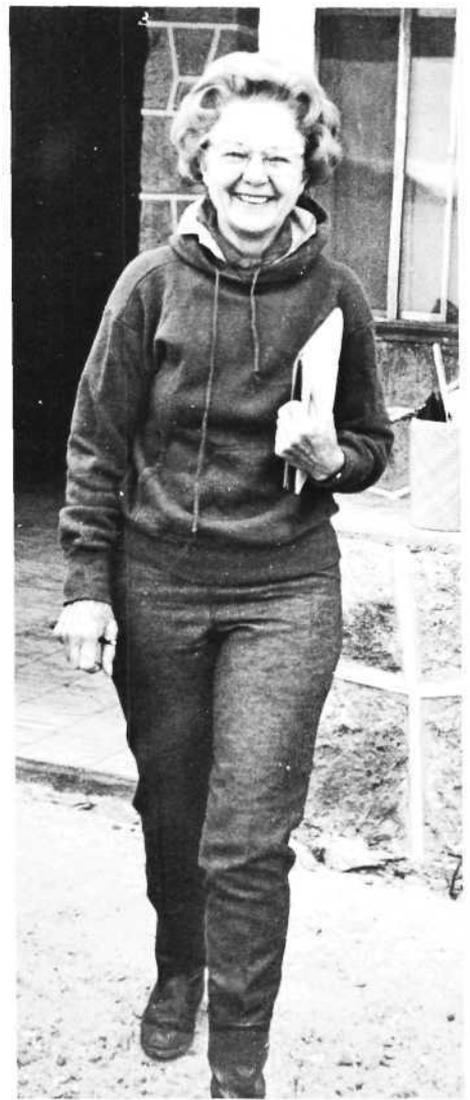
absolutely illegal to take the pearl oysters, incidentally, as the Mexican pearl industry was lost to a freak disease just before World War II and the country is trying frantically to bring it back. Any shell less than four inches across wouldn't hold more than the seed for a pearl anyway and we didn't see any that large, so to



*Sam Hicks and George Yee deliver fish to Juan Brasso.*



*Above: J. W. Black, Uncle Erle, Ricardo Castillo, Bruce Barron, George Yee and Sam Hicks eat breakfast among the cirio trees. Below: Ricardo and George are serious about it, whatever it is. Right: Jean Bethell always has her notebook handy, but she doesn't let it interfere with camp fun.*



bring one up at this time would be not only illegal, but unrewarding. It is hoped that those pearls which do exist will grow and eventually make the Gulf of California a great pearl center again.

There's a romantic fantasy about a beautiful American widow—La Gringa—who once lived in a cabin on this beach, but I've never been able to nail down the details. Whatever, it's a fine beach and a favored camping spot for Baja aficionados who know of it.

I can't say we left Bahia de los Angeles reluctantly—but only because of the lure of unexplored country which lay ahead. Here is a place to come back to, though. There's untouched mystery on its islands and unseen beauty in its hidden palm-lined canyons. You could spend a lot of time in Bahia and never run out of things to do. We talked about this as our caravan followed a trail south which grew fainter and fainter, until at last it dwindled into the mapmaker's realm of nothingness. But, for us, it didn't remain a region of nothingness very long!

**To Be Continued**

# THE COMO THAT WAS

**G**LORY CAME suddenly to Como. Fine quality coarse gold was found in Onion Creek about 1860, but prosperity passed quickly. Those who labored up the tortuous 12-mile climb to Como from Dayton, looking for another Comstock Lode, deluded themselves with rich reports from surrounding districts like Palmyra, but Como itself yielded more chuckles than ore.

Among such notable things, Como had a "Lager Beer" gold ledge, a mysterious natural cave, an Indian scare, and Martin "The Wizard," an accommodating bartender who entertained his patrons with magic tricks, juggling, and ventriloquism. What Como didn't have was sawed lumber to build a coffin for one of its less fortunate citizens who, by committing suicide, held the dubious distinction of having his death recorded as the first one in town.

Owners of Como's brewery dug a basement under their establishment and discovered they were sitting on one of the finest ledges of rich looking quartz any one had ever seen. Promptly christened the "Lager Beer Ledge," this later proved to be a fluke. Experienced workers explored the area and failed to find a paying quantity of ore.

In 1863, three men supposedly found a remarkable cave with long passageways and numerous chambers. The most remarkable thing about it was, according to a newspaper article edited by the *Virginia Union*, the wonderful gold and silver ledges in each chamber. This discovery excited dozens of people and there was a mad scramble to record claims, but it, too, proved worthless.

In the midst of mining activities, Co-

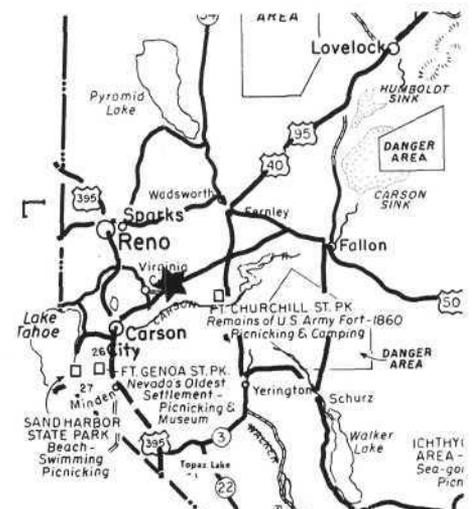
mo's citizens enjoyed dog fights, prize-fights, dances, picnics, and concerts. Fancy balls were held at the elegant two-story National Hotel, which later became the center of social activity. In response to elaborate hand-written invitations, people arrived in buggies, on horseback, and by coaches through a blinding snowstorm over the terrible road from Dayton to attend a Christmas ball. It was an important event, especially since 26 ladies were present and Adolph Sutro, builder of the famous Sutro Tunnel on the Comstock Lode.

Como's first mill was built in California, then transported to Nevada by three six-mule teams at a cost of \$4000, where it was set up in Dayton. Here it proved a failure. Como acquired it in 1863. A lively brass band complete with drums, fifes, and cymbals met the team as it toiled up the steep road. Enthusiastic miners, their tongues loosened with samples of Lager Beer, sang Yankee Doodle, Hail Columbia and other appropriate songs. True to character, the mill made no money for its new owners either. In December 1865, it ground out a 12-horse load of bullion from the Kearsage District, which was taken to Virginia City guarded by troops sent from Fort Churchill. Officials in Virginia City declared it to be nothing more than pyrite of iron.

Everyone in Como was happy, except the Paiute Indians. They objected to their stands of pinon pines being cut down for firewood. Somehow a rumor started that the Indians intended to fight to protect their pinon nuts. Guards were stationed at strategic points all over the area. Women and children were placed in Daniel's Saloon and the one owned by Martin "The Wizard."

While waiting for cavalymen to arrive from nearby Fort Churchill, guards and townspeople inbibed a little too freely, however, and when 20 soldiers showed up over the hill, the guards mistook them for Indians. The soldiers made the same mistake. During the melee, wild shots were fired and men grappled with one another. Until daylight arrived, there was considerable excitement, although no one was hurt. Numaga, leader of a small band of Paiutes camped near town, came in next morning to inquire about the ruckus, and was surprised and hurt to learn his "white friends" had suspected his tribe of chicanery.

Como had such a salubrious climate, it seemed only natural that its first death should be a suicide. It was most unlikely for anyone to die of natural causes. Hard pressed to find lumber for a coffin, residents decided that the only thing suitable was an old wagon bed then being used as a pig pen. So the pig was moved out, and the body moved in. Alf Doten, a friend of the deceased, concocted a mix-



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ture of blood and other materials to stain the wood. Where the blood was obtained is not known. The entire procedure, funeral and coffin, cost \$40.

In 1864 spirited citizens cast 200 votes for Lincoln and not a one for McClellan. They were determined to cast every vote in town. In order to do so, a sick German was taken from his bed and carried to the polls. It is said the man was dead when he voted. It may be that he was alive at the time, but anyway he died shortly afterwards.

In 1864, mining operations were shaky and some people were leaving the district to try their luck elsewhere. Adolph Sutro went to Virginia City to start his famous tunnel; others took off for Austin, Gold Hill, and more exciting places. Although varied methods of mining operations were tried and carried on diligently, for some unknown reason most of Como's gold and silver ore was lost in the reduction processes. Mining operations continued, but production failed to keep up with expectations. The big departure came in 1865.

George Walton was the last resident of Como. Believing in spiritualism, he had absolute faith in Como's mines, particularly the Buckeye, for which he obtained a patent. Packing in supplies and grub from Dayton, Old Como, as he was affectionately known, faithfully did his assessment work. One night, apparently exhausted, he built a fire and went to bed. Sparks from the chimney set fire to the roof before he had a chance to escape. His charred remains were the last of Como until about 1879 when some parties visited the area.

The old town started up again and mining activity was carried on until funds were exhausted, then Como hibernated during the 1890s with the decline in silver prices.

In 1901-02 the North Rapidan and



*Ruins of old mill at Como, Nevada*

Como-Eureka mines employed 11 men on their payroll for a short time. Again in 1916 a number of mining companies formed the Como Consolidated Mines Company acquiring the Buckeye, Rapidan, and Como-Eureka mines. The period from April 1918 to September 1920 was one of great activity, which was again followed by a long period of idleness. During World War II no production was recorded, but there was a little activity in 1949 and 1950 carried on by leasers.

Machinery from the ten-stamp mill was sold and hauled away. Some of the town's buildings were destroyed by fire, others by wind. All that remains today are two or three dilapidated buildings, a few stone foundations, and rusted junk. Miners, salon keepers, gamblers, merchants, and wood cutters have long since departed. Because of its steep terrain and bad roads, Como remains an isolated community. But, who knows, perhaps once again a revival will bring life, activity, and happiness to this pretty, little mountain community of ghosts? □

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# Once there was a Spotted Cow-- and now there's a treasure

A FRENCH ancestor of mine made a sad mistake. On his route across the ocean, he detoured by way of the Emerald Isle. Some time later, he made a second error. He failed to check his Irish bride's luggage for one of those slippery little hobgoblins the Irish call leprechauns. My Irish luck is *prima-facia* evidence of that ancestor's carelessness. No self-respecting French gnome would have led me on so many wild goose chases.

The tale of the Spotted Cow is a good example.

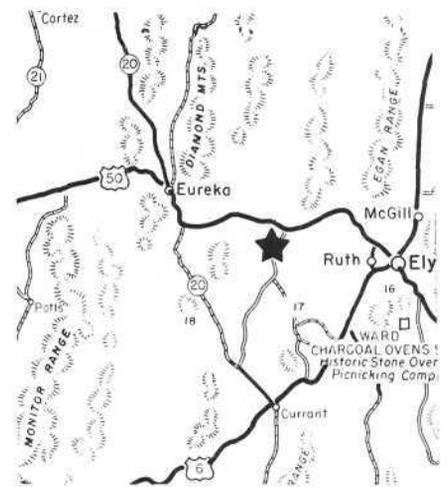
The story has two parts, and naturally I heard the last part first, by many years. The leprechaun must have been right there at the telling, because at that time I figured "the treasure" was 21 bottles of moonshine whiskey—not 21 flasks of quicksilver—and there is a vast difference. In addition, the slumped market price for mercury in those days was so low

it would hardly have been worth chasing, even on a poverty stake. At today's inflated price, 21 flasks of "quick" will not buy a yacht; but if you had them, you could sure give the installment collectors a rough time.

Since I'm not a leprechaun, I'll give you the narrative in sequence and, perhaps, if you don't wear the brand of Erin, you can find the heavy cache of liquid metal yourself.

In my search for information I hit pay dirt in the early fall of '59 at Ely, Nevada. While chasing another cache story, I needed to find someone who knew a lot about the ghost town of Hamilton, situated 40 miles or so to the west. Several old timers agreed that "Jake Albertz" was the man to see and one of them introduced me.

Mr. Albertz had spent his youth in Hamilton about the time the metropolis



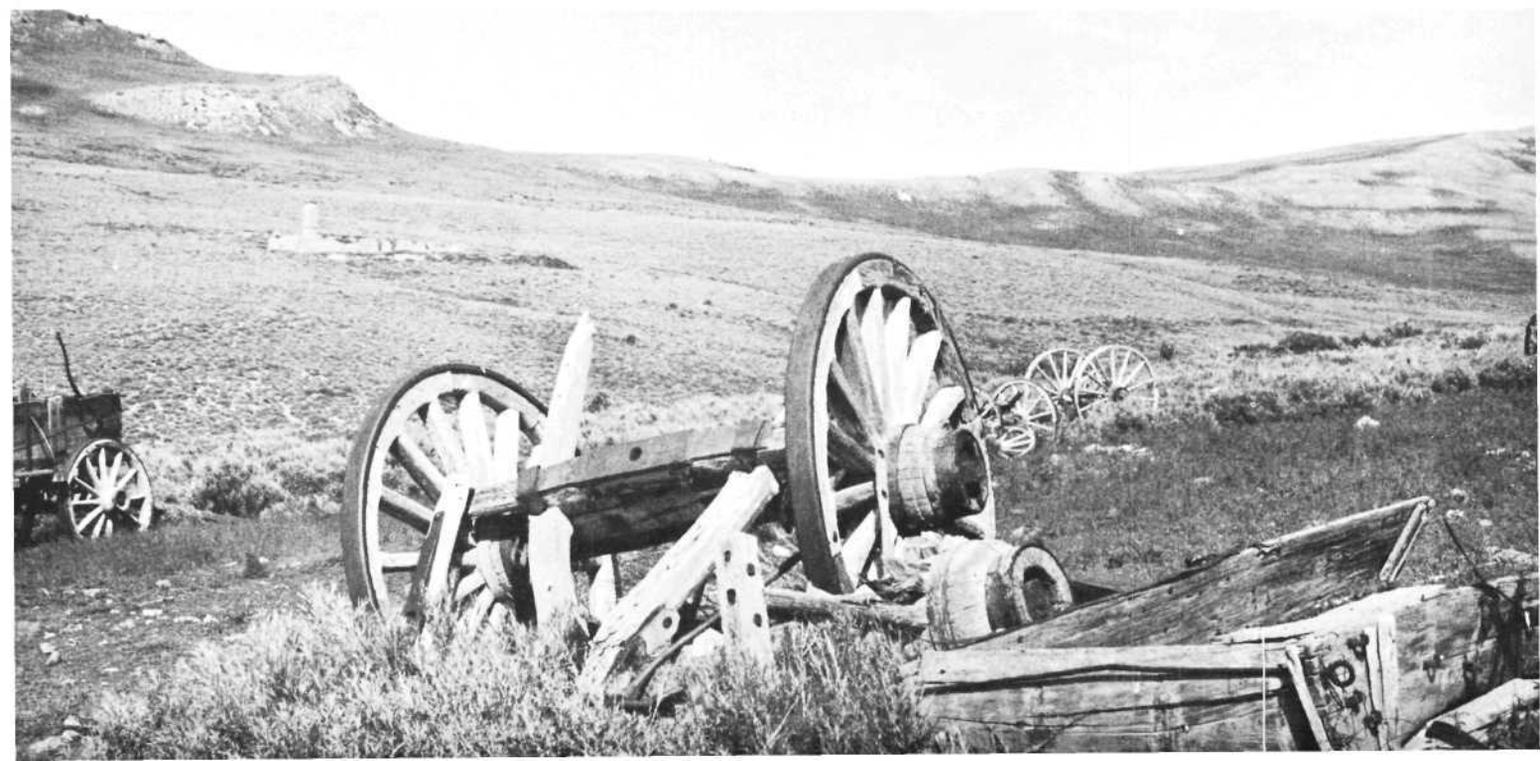
by Kenneth Marquiss

started to decline. He agreed to be my guide.

In the mellow mountain twilight we stepped across decades to sense again the merriment of plush Withington Hotel with its accommodations fit for royalty. The mixed aroma of calico and kerosene, onions and pickle barrels floated out from under the soft yellow light of the oil lamps in Porminco's store; and from the gully, we heard the muffled call of the joss gongs in Chinatown and the faint ragtime tinkle of pianos down the line.

In the morning we descended Cathedral Canyon to Eberhardt to visit the ruins of the huge mills which had ground out the ore from Treasure Hill. We had crossed the tailings flat to hunt for relics when, looking back, Mr. Albertz laughed and said, "Up on top of that mill there, was where the mill superintendent was when he shot the spotted cow."

*Where the cow roamed at Hamilton.*



This seemed so irrelevant that I asked if they'd been hard up for beef.

"No, no," Albertz countered, "that was the spotted cow that stole so many bottles of 'quick'."

The phrase "so many bottles" got to me. I pulled out my notebook and began to quiz him.

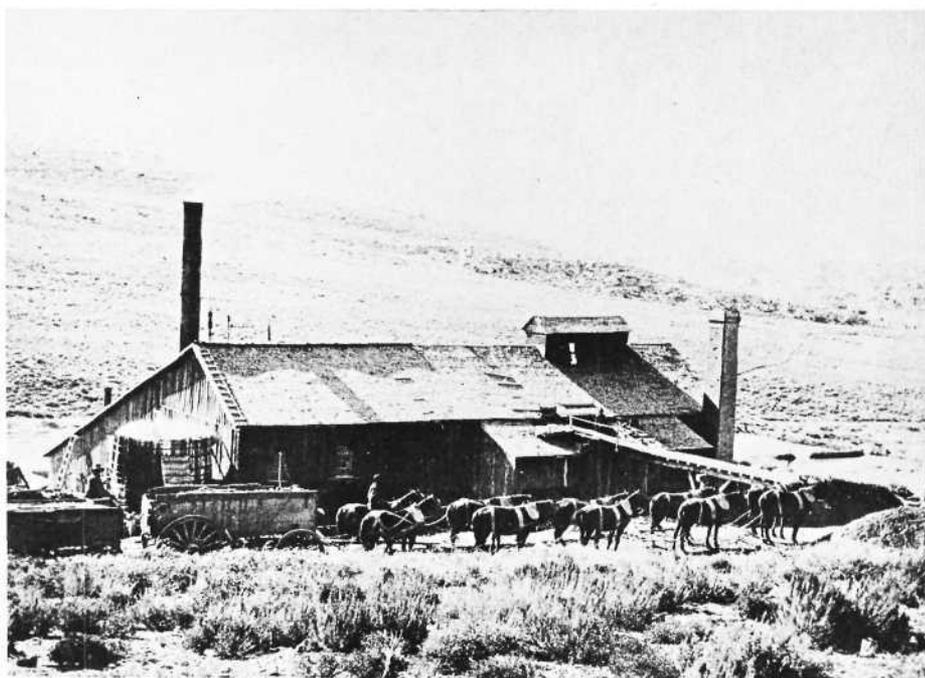
The fantastic ore from the mines on Treasure Hill, he recalled, had caused a rash of mills to be erected. Within months they were pounding out 30 to 60 thousand dollars worth of silver-gold-lead slugs every week. They didn't have the advantage of modern xanthate froth separation, impact jigs, gyratory crushers, or gas smelting, and most of them were either California pattern stamps or circular Chilian mills. Because the ores varied from the acid and chloride to the base galena types, according to location and depth, the mills specialized in refining a specific kind of ore; and this particular plant used large quantities of quicksilver in the process.

Because much of the mercury came from Spain (the Mother Lode and Virginia City booms had soaked up the limited production of the California San Benito mines), the price was high and each little cast iron flask, with its 76 pounds of fluid metal, was guarded as zealously as the stacks of silver-gold ingots.

Everything at the mill went along famously until a grouchy Welsh mill foreman came to the superintendent with the news that they were using too much mercury. An investigation showed there was nothing amiss with the process. Someone was stealing the quick!

Immediately security measures were instituted. Everybody was suspect and traps were set up to nab the thief. Still more mercury vanished. The smart thief had a fool-proof system. He knew better than to walk away with a half-empty flask (it will throw you on your ear), so he stole a whole flask at a time, seemingly whenever he felt like it. While the superintendent went out of his mind trying to catch the larcenous will-o-the-wisp, the boss bought himself a new winchester and started to haunt the mill all hours of the day and night. It got so bad that the mill hands wouldn't touch a mercury flask with a 10 foot stick unless the foreman was right there to serve as a bullet protection.

Things had reached a crisis when the boss sneaked up on the roof of the mill one evening and posted himself where he could see all of the interior. He figured it was just about time for the thief to strike again. Everything inside the mill



ran monotonously normal as he settled himself into a comfortable position. The men were lighting the lamp wicks in camp, the smell of fried potatoes and onions permeated the air and the burros, loose mules and range cows were peacefully grazing on the mountainside. Even the old spotted cow was . . . suddenly the boss froze! He'd seen that spotted bovine before! It had an unusual grazing pattern in that it came in closer to the mill than the other stock. Now, from his high vantage point, he noticed something else odd. There was something stiff and clumsy in the way it fed. It was odd, all right—damned odd.

He eased back the hammer, drew a careful bead, and squeezed the trigger.

The rifle's roar set off a wild yell. A cowhide-covered willow frame bounced down the hillside and the lithe figure of a man jumped up and raced into a narrow canyon that curved up to the southeast to a mountain pass.

The mill boss snapped off two more shots at the running figure, but only the second one connected. It knocked the thief, spinning and jerking, into the sagebrush, but he got up and made good his escape.

By the time the boss climbed down from the roof and collected a posse, it was too dark to follow the tracks. Early the next day they found the thief's trail, but he'd fallen in behind a herd of bronses and hoof prints went every which way.

Mr. Albertz chuckled as he concluded the story with the remark that this was

the end of the spotted cow and the quicksilver hefts, but that it was a long time before anyone had the courage to ask the mill boss if he had done "any cow hunting lately."

It wasn't the end for me, however, because I'd recalled a story that connected with it.

Back in the spring of 1935 I had been employed as assayer and mineralogist for an eccentric (and alcoholic) Los Angeles millionaire who thought he had developed a theory of subterranean magmatic fractures that would completely upset the mining world and make him a modern Croesus. He was scared of wild country, however, so when we went into the field to prove his theory, it turned out that he spent most of his time in bars.

One morning I was drinking coffee in a small western Nevada saloon where I was sounding off about drunks in general and the current crop in particular, when one of them objected. He claimed the present generation was much better than previous ones and said he could prove it. "Why, back in them days they sometimes even killed each other over a few lousy bottles of booze!" he said, proceeding to tell a long-winded yarn about a cowpuncher in the old days who was working north of Duckwater and found a man with a bullet hole in him who'd about run out of blood and time. The victim was delirious and kept raving about 21 full bottles, someone named Joe, a twin cedar, some big rocks, something about "six miles" and something else covered with ashes. I wrote it all down in my notebook

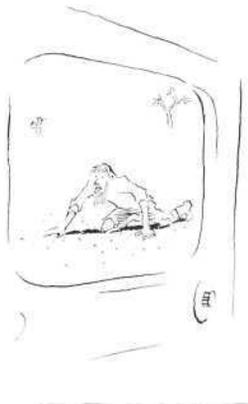
under a local color heading because I'd known a number of occasions when a dying man's directions later turned out to make sense. This was one of those occasions.

After my Hamilton trip, the old story fell into place because one of the spots Mr. Albertz took me to was an old stage station named Six Mile! It was on the stage route between Hamilton and Pioche, situated over the mountains in a canyon southeast of Eberhardt. To frost the cake, Eberhardt and Six Mile make the north end of a narrow triangle, the south point of which is Duckwater. The two stories teamed up like liver and onions!

It was almost a year before I could re-

turn to Treasure Hill; then I did a lot of looking. With a metal detector, those old rusty bottles would "sing" like a wagon wheel, if I could only get close to them. But I didn't. The big canyon of the old stage station has too many places that fit the "twin cedar, big rocks" description—and how do you decide which way is "back of?"

I looked in all the *logical* places, but with my Irish luck, the cache probably rests in an *illogical* one. Failure is undoubtedly due to that diabolical family leprechaun. But if you aren't Irish, and if you aren't logical, you just might have better luck. Considering the present tag on mercury, it's sure worth a chance! □



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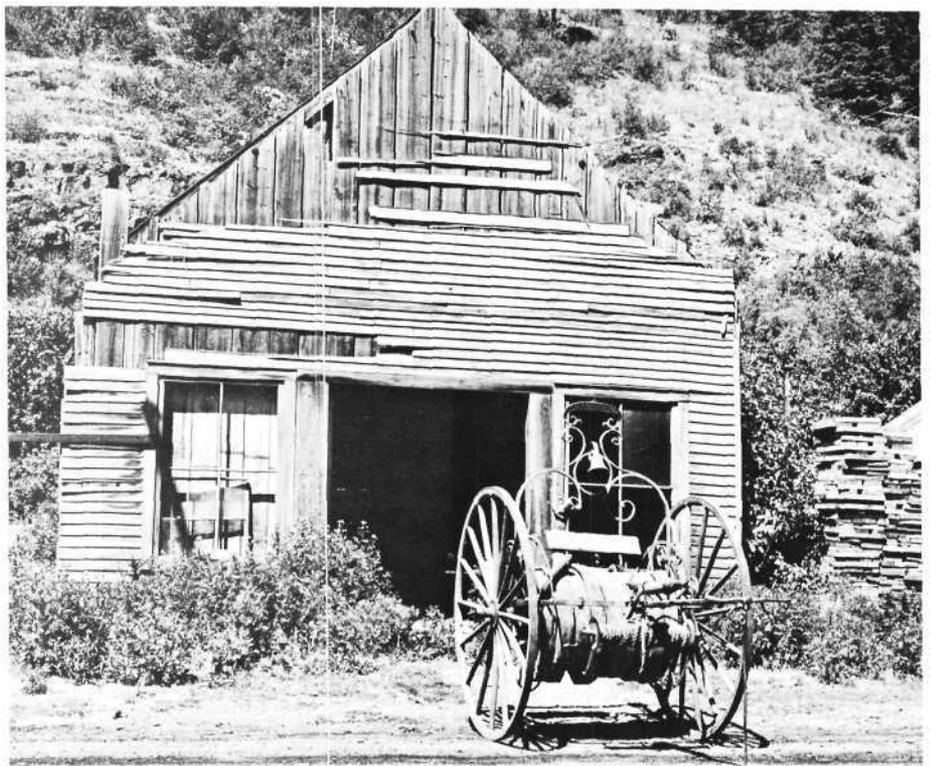
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Ghost Town Treasures.

## Murray, Idaho

BY LAMBERT FLORIN



CENTURY MAGAZINE, October 1884, carried a story on the Idaho town of Murray, then in the throes of a fantastic mining boom. The writer, one Smalley, was a hard man to please. Of the trip from Thompson Falls, he wrote, "Following the trail through the solitudes of this gloomy wilderness is not a cheerful proceeding. The sky is barely visible, and there are no sounds to break the stillness, save the roar of the torrent." Upon arriving at Murray he described the active town, "It is composed of a hideous half-mile of huts, shanties and tents with three or four cross streets that run up against the slopes after a few rods of progress. A more unattractive place than Murray I have seldom seen. The trees have been cleared away, leaving a bare gulch into which the sun pours for 16 hours a day with a fervor which seems designed by nature to make up for the coolness of the short July night."

Though critical, Smalley's description was accurate, as it would have been for almost any gold-rush camp in the Coeur d'Alenes, including Murray. After all, only two years had passed since A. J. Pritchard washed out a panful of gold in the creek that would bear his name, at the site that would be Murray. Pritchard couldn't know that his find would found an entire mining district, but he was aware that unless he could keep the discovery secret for at least a short time, his friends wouldn't get in on the strike. He

wrote to several fraternity brothers, inviting them to hurry over and stake out claims. When they arrived, it was with hordes of others who had somehow scented what was in the wind.

A town grew along the creek in the usual pattern of boom camps, except it was never a tent city. As no road reached it for several years, a pack train was soon established and one of the first loads transported on muleback was a sawmill brought in section by section. Assembled among the trees, it ate out a large clearing, providing space for a town and material for building at the same time.

By the mid-80s, Murray had attained the semblance of a real town. Strung along the main street were 12 general stores, half a dozen restaurants, three drug stores and a hotel. Again quoting Smalley, he found that, "Stumps and half-charred logs encumber the streets and serve as seats for inhabitants . . . Every other building is a drinking saloon . . . the town is full of men out of work and out of money who hang about the saloon and curse the camp in all the styles of profanity known to a miner's vocabulary."

Not built until after Smalley's visit was Murray's notorious "Pink House." This structure, though only one of several establishments of similar purpose confined to the bottom of the hill, stood out conspicuously. Color, alone, wasn't the cause, it had a reputation for extra curricular activities such as rolling and blackmail. While not condoned, the practices

continued for as long as none of the victims, many of them prominent business men, refused to file formal complaints. Eventually, however, the operation grew over-confident and was closed down. Eventually it was moved to replace a building burned out in one of Murray's many fires. In its new location, the Pink House, now a respectable brown, served as a hospital. It is one of the surviving buildings in town today.

Murray's most colorful character was Mary Burden, originally from Ireland. She had come to Murray in its first few months, packing in over the Thompson Trail. Her reputation as an angel of mercy was established on the trip when she took over the care of a sick child when the mother collapsed. Mary at first attached herself to any miner who had money, but later established an exclusive clientele with one or two of Murray's nouveau riche. But even when well provided for, she continued to nurse the ill and unfortunate. As a result, she escaped the ostracism accorded her sisterhood and when she herself was stricken with a fatal illness, she was nursed by Murray's "respectable" ladies. They also saw to it that when Mary Burden died, she was given decent burial.

Murray was born of placer gold found in her gulches. When the yellow metal had been panned out, then dredged, the town died. Unlike her neighbors, Osborn, Mullen, Wallace and Kellog, she had no other metals to fall back upon. □

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# PEGLEG GOLD

Continued from Page 17

been screened. Near the top of one, where the rain had washed a spot clean, I found a half-ounce gold nugget entirely covered with a black coating. It was then my friends confessed they'd found two similar nuggets on a previous visit. However, they'd carried several pans of gravel to the river and panned them with no results.

The cut bank around the crown of the hill had caved to the extent that the underground portion of the workings were barely noticeable, but the top of one of the coyote holes was still evident. Analyzing the workings, we concluded that the gravel had been worked dry, but there still could be overlooked gold in the gravel piles.

World War II intervened, so it wasn't until the fall of 1946 that my friends completed plans to re-work the gravel of the Old Spanish mine. Transporting a high pressure pump and pipe down the river to the location, they set up sluice boxes on the side of the hill. Pumping water from the river, the leavings of the Peralta party were sluiced. While I cannot say how much gold they recovered, I did see some of it—all in the form of nuggets from the size of a match head to that of a walnut. No fine gold was found. And, nearly all of it was coated with black. I know of no other occurrence of gold like this along the Mother Lode. It is more common to find fine gold and few nuggets. Black coated gold, however, has been observed in various places throughout the area, but never in much quantity.

Although chances of finding a black nugget at these old workings today is remote, anyone who would like to visit the old Spanish mine will find it on the south side of the Calaveras River in Calaveras County approximately six miles downstream from the Hogan Dam near Valley Springs. There's no road and although the area still retains much of the wilderness atmosphere that met the eyes of Moraga's party in 1806, it's now private property and permission should be granted before you enter onto it.

When I started digging into the history of the Old Spanish mine, I had no idea of a connection with the lost black gold of Peg-leg Smith. But when I read of the fortune in black gold nuggets strewn over those small hills in the distant Colorado Desert, I felt I was reading the final chapter of an episode of California history that can be answered in no other way. □

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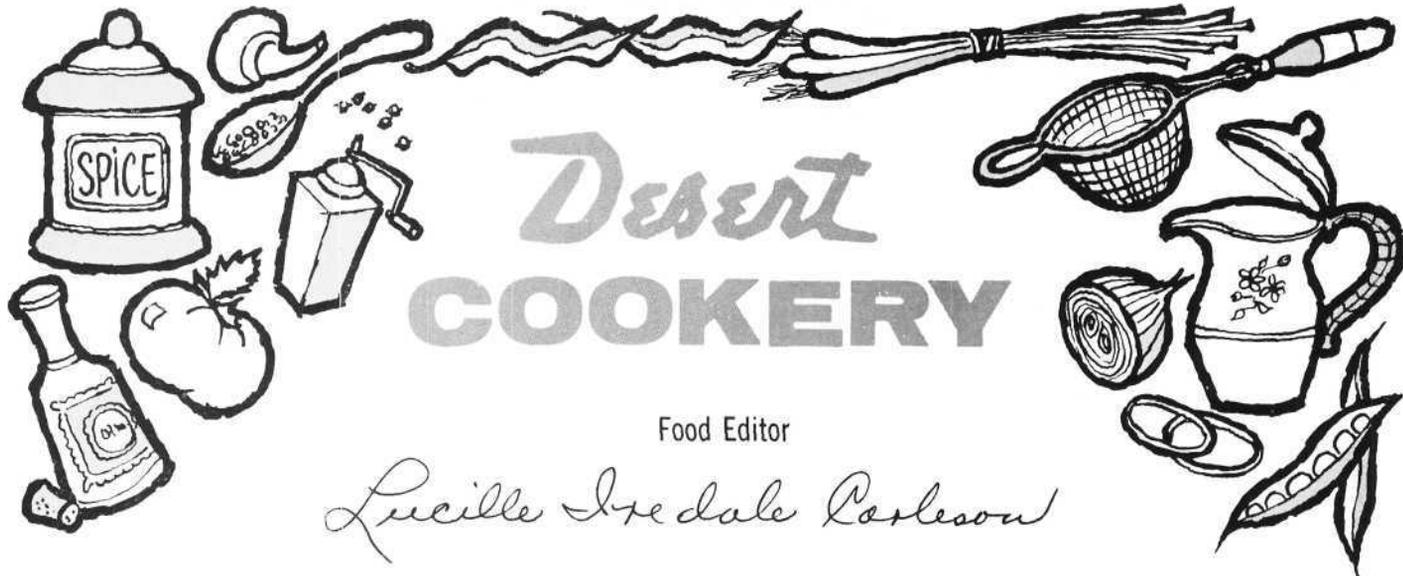
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# Desert COOKERY

Food Editor

*Lucille Iredale Carlson*

## ORANGE BAVARIAN CREME

- 1/2 cup canned milk
- 2 tablespoons gelatin
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup orange juice

Dissolve the gelatin in the 1/4 cup orange juice, over hot water. Stir in the sugar and 3/4 cup orange juice. Place the canned milk in freezing compartment of refrigerator until it is beginning to freeze around the edges. Have your beaters cold. Whip the milk until it is very thick. When gelatin mixture begins to thicken, fold in whipped milk.

## STRAWBERRY SPONGE

- 1 envelope plain gelatin
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup strawberry juice and pulp
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup cream whipped and 2 egg whites beaten stiff

Crush strawberries, add sugar and allow to stand about 1/2 hour. Pour cold water in bowl and sprinkle gelatin over it. Add hot water and 1/4 teaspoon salt; stir until thoroughly dissolved. Add strawberry mixture and lemon juice. Cool, and when it begins to thicken, fold in whipped cream and stiffly beaten egg whites. Turn into glasses. Serve decorated with whole berries. This may be put into a pie shell for Chiffon pie, or put over a slice of angel food or sponge cake and topped with whipped cream and whole berries.

## Warm Weather Desserts

### MACEDOINE OF FRUIT WITH GINGER SAUCE

- 1 pineapple, cubed or 4 cans of pineapple, drained. You may use the frozen pineapple.
- 2 cups frozen blueberries
- 2 10 oz. packages of frozen peaches
- 1 pint strawberries

Sprinkle peaches with 1 tablespoon lemon juice; taste for sweetness and if too tart, add a little sugar. Alternate layers of different fruits in parfait glass, reserving some whole strawberries for topping. Spoon sauce over top when ready to serve, adding a sprig of mint for garnish.

### Sauce

This may be made a day or two ahead and seasoned in refrigerator. Place in covered bowl.

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger (or to taste)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 1/4 cups pineapple juice
- 2 tablespoons corn starch
- 1/2 tablespoon grated lemon rind
- 1 12-oz. can apricot nectar

Mix sugar, corn starch, rind and spices, then stir into rest of ingredients, mixing until smooth. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes or until it coats spoon.

## ORANGE BANANA SHERBET

- 2 eggs
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 1 can frozen orange juice concentrate, undiluted and thawed
- 3/4 cup mashed ripe bananas

In large bowl beat eggs to combine yolks and whites. Slowly beat in sugar, then corn syrup. Mix in buttermilk and orange concentrate. Pour into 1 or 2 shallow pans; place in freezer until almost firm, about 2 hours. Turn into bowl, break into small pieces and beat until consistency is uniform (do not melt). Mash bananas and stir into mixture. Freeze 3 to 5 hours. Makes 1 quart. You may combine with another flavor of ice cream to make a parfait.

## PERFECT PINEAPPLE SHERBET

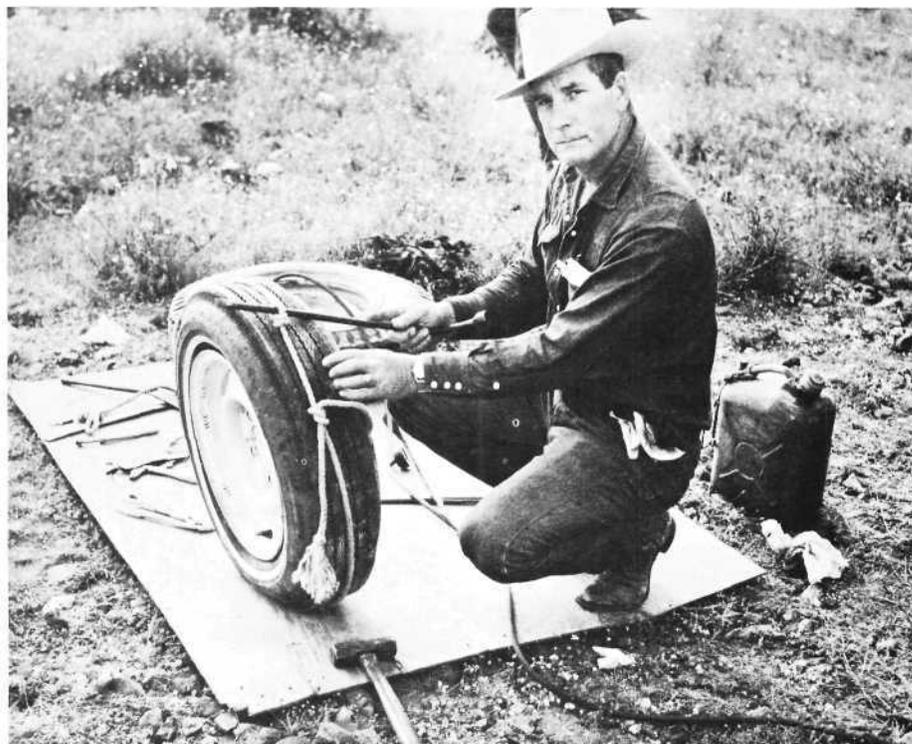
No cream, you'd never guess, it's buttermilk!

- 2 cups buttermilk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 9 oz. can crushed pineapple
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 tablespoon unflavored gelatine
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 stiffly beaten egg white

Combine buttermilk, sugar, pineapple and vanilla; add gelatin, softened in the 2 tablespoons of cold water and dissolved over hot water. Fold in egg white. Freeze in freezing compartment of refrigerator about 3 to 4 hours. Stir once during freezing. Serves 4 to 6.

# Hints for Desert Travelers

by Bruce Barron



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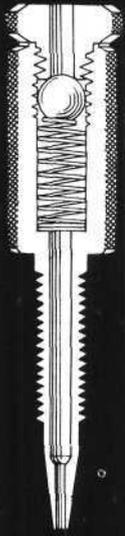
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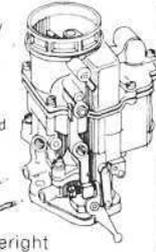
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# LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Letters requesting answers must include stamped self-addressed envelope

### Pardon Our Earp . . .

*To the Editor:* I disagree with reader Gilchriese who criticized the story in your March issue. Wyatt Earp and his famous brothers did as much as any one group ever did to make a lawless wilderness into a civilized country. There is too little hero-worship in our world today and children need it. So why discredit a famous man who lived and died before Mr. Gilchriese was born? As to his statement that there was "no fight at the big corral," all I can say is, unless he's a descendent of the McLowerys or the Clantons or sheriff Johnny Behan, he'd better steer his old hoss clear of the Tombstone Epitaph as well as all offices of court, territorial and government in that area.

Mr. Gilchriese drew attention to the error in the date that Wyatt drove a freight wagon over the San Gorgonio Pass, but didn't bother to correct it. It was in the year of 1865 and Wyatt had just turned 17 years of age on March 19, 1865.

VERNA W. SMITH,  
Azusa, California.

### Horse of a Different Side . . .

*To the Editor:* I must tell you how much I enjoyed the May Utah issue of DESERT. I have made 17 trips on vacations there and still haven't seen it all. Did you know that the front cover photo of Dead Horse Point is "wrong side to?"

ANDREW MILLER,  
Pico Rivera, California.

*Editor's note: The negative was flipped in the printing process. C.P.*

### DESERT Scooped Reader . . .

*To the Editor:* Your magazine cheated me out of a treasure. For the past two years I have researched and prepared for a trip I made to look for the Cibola treasure (December, 1965), then a few days after DESERT hit the newsstands a man about 60 years old from Phoenix went to the ruins beside the Colorado River there. He arrived early in the morning and was seen with a metal detector. Then he left that night in a hurry and the next morning a freshly dug hole about 3½ feet deep and 2 feet wide and 2½ feet long was found. You could tell a chest of some sort had been laying in there for a long time. It was heavy, as the ropes he used to haul it out left marks on the edge of the hole. This man wasn't even a professional as he didn't fill his hole or remove signs of his recent digging. Old timers I've talked to say that those ruins were probably from a man named Rhodes, rather than a "woodchopper." However, I wouldn't belittle the Cibola Ghost. We were awakened twice one night with the wildest noise I've ever heard—and it wasn't any horse.

I'm going out to look for another treasure now and I sure hope I get there this time before the next DESERT gets out.

WILLIAM BALLANTINE,  
Hinkley, California.

*Editor's comment: DESERT is mailed to subscribers 10 days before it hits the newsstand. If you'd been a subscriber, the treasure would have been yours! C.P.*

### Sharp Reader . . .

*To the Editor:* In your April issue, there is a story, *The Tumacacori Treasure*, which contains a purported translation of Mission records revealing the location of treasure, written in the mid-17th century. Part of the directions mention "one Kilometer". It is my impression that the French did not set up the standards of metric measurement until around 1799. The use of the term "kilometer" a century and a half earlier by the good fathers would seem to me to be an extraordinary example of precognition, and one which I am sure any society devoted to psychic research would be interested in.

WILLARD S. WOOD,  
Del Mar, California.

### Mystery Revealed . . .

*To the Editor:* I read the article, *The Treasure of Tumacacori* by Allen Pearce. I have been hearing that story since I was a child. To remove the mystery of the inscription on the Rock (M200) I knew the man who carved it there. His name was Benjamin Benedict. Back in the early '30s, he and his son spent a long time looking for the treasure until his sponsor, a rich Easterner, refused to furnish any more money. I know all these mountains, streams, and mines from the Huachuclas to the border and west to the Cerritos mountain and have worked in the mines, including the Ruby Mine. Jenkins did not discover that mine. It had already been discovered long ago. The Santa Cruz River starts in the Huachucla Mountains, flows south into Mexico, then swings north into U.S., flowing northwest and drains into the Gila River, and into the Colorado. It goes underground just northwest of the present Tumacacori Mission.

The treasure which the average seeker of our modern society can find, Mr. Pearce does not mention. That is the clean fresh air and sunshine, the awe inspiring vistas, the majestic sunrises and sunsets.

THE MAN FROM TUBAC,  
Hermosa Beach, California.

### Snakebite . . .

*To the Editor:* Lucile Martens' *Springtime is Snakebite* article in April was worthwhile. The information on rattlesnakes was interesting but cuts made in attempting to drain venom can result in more serious infection. Sometimes even when attempted by qualified medical persons the method is not satisfactory. Inexperienced persons can cause infection, incise too deeply or improperly and the complications could compound the hazard. The present method for dealing with venomous wounds is cryotherapy. Arizona State College has printed information, but simply stated, cryotherapy consists of isolating the wound and slowing the enzyme activity; especially important with hemotoxins like rattlesnake venom. A tourniquet is placed snugly and loosened occasionally while chilling the area with an evaporating damp cloth, spray packs, ice packs, or even cool water. Secure medical aid as soon as possible and request further application of cryotherapy techniques, a safer and surer method than slicing and suctioning.

JAMES M. SCOTT,  
Redwood City, California.



# THE MEASURE OF TIME

by John Robie

**A** LITTLE KNOWLEDGE of geology makes desert traveling much more interesting. Scientists tell us that our Western Desert was once at the bottom of the sea. Through slow and continual movement the earth's surface rose. What is now the great Southwest Desert was first a swamp; then covered with lush vegetation, abundant life, and fish filled lakes. However, the earth's crust continued to rise and buckle. The majestic Sierra-Nevada mountains were formed. As they rose higher and higher the weather pattern changed. Rain spilled out on the western slopes and no longer crossed the mountains. The desert was born.

As the vast inland seas began to evaporate and shrink, the winds blew and the sun baked the drying earth. The sedimentary deposits at the bottom of the lakes became exposed flats of packed mud and gravels. What rain fell usually came in thunderstorms and cloudbursts. They quickly cut the mud and silt. Gullies turned into canyons, and canyons into valleys. Mother nature was at work carving out the wastelands we know today.

When we consider the millions of years involved in the forming of our world as we know it, and the moment of time we are here to enjoy it, we should realize that each minute is very precious. How we use time is important. □

# Read these Reviews!

Choral Pepper and her husband, Jack, edit the "Desert Magazine" and from time to time they turn out a book about the sandy, flowered areas to which they swear eternal allegiance. "Cooking and Camping on the Desert" is such a book and it is a good one. With a foreword by Erle Stanley Gardner, a friend of the Peppers and a long-time desert rat himself, the book offers a goodly number of recipes . . . in addition, it offers an excellent basic text for the amateur apprentice desert rat. **DR. FREDERICK SHROYER, Los Angeles Herald-Examiner Literary Editor.**

"Cooking and Camping on the Desert" is more than just a book on preparing for a desert outing or making meals that will appeal while in camp. This book is a brief manual on how to survive in the desert . . . the book is a must for anyone making a trip to the desert, whether it is his first or fiftieth. **BILL HILTON, Santa Barbara News-Press.**

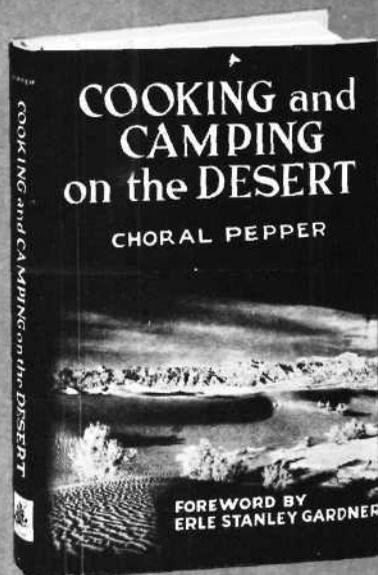
Now a recognized wizard at camp cookery, none other than Choral Pepper, who edits Desert Magazine, has written a new book, "Cooking and Camping on the Desert" which needs to be in everyone's camp kit, and above all needs to be read while desert safaris are yet in the planning stage. **L. BURR BELDON, San Bernardino Sun-Telegram.**

Those who've done even limited camping know what (Erle Stanley) Gardner is talking about—and will probably enjoy what Choral and her husband, Jack, talk about in the book . . . This reporter, sometime camper-fisherman is neither gourmet nor cook—but Choral's handy book makes me enthusiastic enough to want to be. **REX NEVINS, Riverside Daily Enterprise.**

Special Chapter by

**JACK PEPPER**

Driving and Surviving on the Desert



Foreword

by

**ERLE STANLEY GARDNER**



## Cooking and Camping on the Desert

**By Choral Pepper, Editor Desert Magazine**

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