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Volume 37, Number 4

APRIL, 1974

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Vegetation on Guardian Angel Island in the Gulf of California. See article on page 20. Photography by Ernie Cowan of Escondido, California.

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BOOKS OF

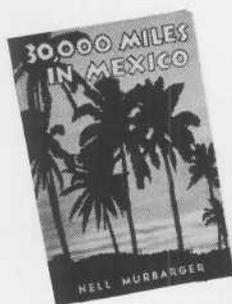
50 YEARS IN DEATH VALLEY by Harry P. Gower. First hand account of the dramatic mining years by a man who spent his life in the mysterious valley. Describes the famous characters of Death Valley. Paperback, illustrated, 145 pages, \$2.95.

THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTHWEST by the Editors of *Sunset Books*. A pictorial with a brief text showing modern day activities of cities such as Phoenix, El Paso, Taos, and communities below the Mexican border, and covering the Southwestern states, canyons and deserts. 240 photographs of which 47 are four-color, large format, 223 pages, hardcover, \$10.95.

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THE NORTH AMERICAN DESERTS by Edmund C. Jaeger. A long-time authority on all phases of desert areas and life, Dr. Jaeger's book on the North American Deserts should be carried where ever you travel. It not only describes each of the individual desert areas, but has illustrated sections on desert insects, reptiles, birds, mammals and plants. 315 pages, illustrated photographs, line drawings and maps. Hardcover, \$6.95.

BACKYARD TREASURE HUNTING by Lucie Lowery. The strange world of auctions, swap-meets, backyard and garage sales, treasure hunting and metal locators is examined by the author and described in zesty language. Paperback, cartoon illustrated, 95 pages, \$1.95.



GHOST TOWNS OF THE NORTHWEST by Norman D. Weis. The ghost-town country of the Pacific Northwest including trips to many little-known areas, is explored in this first-hand factual and interesting book. Excellent photography. Best book to date on ghost towns of the Northwest. Maps. Hardcover, heavy slick paper, 319 pages, \$6.95.

DESERT GEM TRAILS by Mary Frances Strong. *DESERT Magazine's* Field Trip Editor has revised and brought up to date her popular field guide for rockhounds. She has deleted areas which are now closed to the public and added new areas not covered before. The maps have also been updated. This is the "bible" for both amateur and veteran rockhounds and back country explorers. Heavy paperback, 80 pages and still the same price, \$2.00.

SOURDOUGH COOKBOOK by Don and Myrtle Holm. How to make a sourdough starter and many dozens of sourdough recipes, plus amusing anecdotes by the authors of the popular *Old Fashioned Dutch Oven Cookbook*. A new experience in culinary adventures. Paperback, 136 slick pages, illustrated, \$3.95.

FROSTY, A Raccoon to Remember by Harriett E. Weaver. The only uniformed woman on California's State Park Ranger crews for 20 years, Harriett Weaver shares her hilarious and heart-warming experiences of being a "mother" to an orphaned baby raccoon. A delightful book for all ages. Illustrated with line-drawings by Jennifer O. Dewey, hard cover, 156 pages, \$5.95

RELICS OF THE WHITEMAN by Marvin and Helen Davis. A logical companion to *Relics of the Redman*, this book brings out a marked difference by showing in its illustrations just how "suddenly modern" the early West became after the arrival of the white man. The difference in artifacts typifies the historical background in each case. The same authors tell how and where to collect relics of these early days, tools needed, and how to display and sell valuable pieces. Paperback, well illustrated in color and b/w, 63 pages, \$3.95.



GOLDEN CHIA, by Harrison Doyle. This book illustrates the great difference between the high desert chia, and the Mexican variety presently sold in the health food stores. It identifies the energy-factor, a little-known trace mineral found only in the high desert seeds. Also includes a section on vitamins, minerals, proteins, enzymes, etc., needed for good nutrition. Referred to as "the only reference book in America on this ancient Indian energy food." 100 pages, illustrated, Paperback, \$4.75; Cloth Cover, \$7.75.

THE CALIFORNIA MISSIONS by the Editors of *Sunset Books*. A beautifully written history of California's 21 missions. One can feel, as he reads, the fervor of the padres as they gathered materials to build their churches, and an insight into history develops as the authors tell in simple prose what was going on in the world at the same time. 300 pages, complete with artful sketches and photographs, and paintings in color, hardcover, large format, \$12.75.

NEVADA GHOST TOWNS AND MINING CAMPS by Stanley W. Paher. Covering all of Nevada's 17 counties, Paher has documented 575 mining camps, many of which have been erased from the earth. The book contains the greatest and most complete collection of historic photographs of Nevada ever published. This, coupled with his excellent writing and map, creates a book of lasting value. Large 9x11 format, 700 photographs, hardcover, 492 pages, \$15.00.

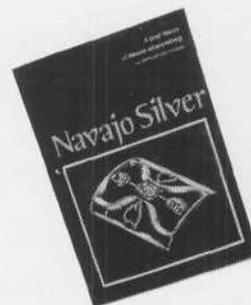
MOCKEL'S DESERT FLOWER NOTEBOOK by Henry and Beverly Mockel. The well-known painter of desert wildflowers has combined his four-color sketches and black and white photographs to describe in detail so the layman can easily identify wildflowers, both large and small. Microscopic detail makes this an outstanding book for identification. Special compressed fiber cover which will not stain. 54 full-color illustrations with 72 life-size drawings and 39 photographs, 316 pages, \$5.95.

HOPI SILVER, The History and Hallmarks of Hopi Silversmithing by Margaret Wright. Years of research have made this book a historically descriptive piece on the Hopi silversmiths. Illustrated with many photographs of silverwork, and more than a dozen pages devoted to the various hallmarks beginning in 1890 and continued through 1971, naming the silversmith, the clan, the village, dates worked and whether or not the silverwork is still being made. Paperback, 100 pages, \$4.95.

NAVAJO SILVER by Arthur Woodward. A summary of the history of silversmithing by the Navajo tribe, Woodward presents a comprehensive view of the four major influences on Navajo design, showing how the silversmiths adapted the art forms of European settlers and Indians in the eastern United States, as well as those of the Spanish and Mexican colonists of the Southwest. Paperback, well illustrated, 100 pages, \$4.95.

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WILY WOMEN OF THE WEST by Grace Ernestine Ray. Such women of the West as Belle Starr, Cattle Kate and Lola Montez weren't all good and weren't all bad, but were fascinating and conflicting personalities, as researched by the author. Their lives of adventure were a vital part of the life of the Old West. Hardcover, illustrated, 155 pages, \$5.95.



CORONADO'S CHILDREN by J. Frank Dobie. Originally published in 1930, this book about lost mines and buried treasures of the West is a classic and is as vital today as when first written. Dobie was not only an adventurer, but a scholar and a powerful writer. A combination of legends and factual background. Hardcover, 376 pages, \$3.95.

GOLD AND SILVER IN THE WEST by T. H. Watkins. The author brings together for the first time the entire story of gold and silver mining in the West. It tells of conquistadores chasing myths in Old Mexico, gold and silver strikes in the West, Alaska, Mexico and Canada, the rise and fall of mining ventures, promotional schemes and today's operations. Hardbound, large format, 212 illustrations (75 in 4-color), 288 pages, \$17.50.

THE WEST

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JOURNEY OF THE FLAME by Walter Nordhoff. The most exciting tale of early Baja and Alta California ever written. Recounts lost treasure legends and its accurate historical account presented in fictional style. Hardcover, \$4.95.

LOST DESERT BONANZAS by Eugene Conrotto. Brief resumes of lost mine articles printed in back issues of *DESERT* Magazine, by a former editor. Hardcover, 278 pages, \$7.50.

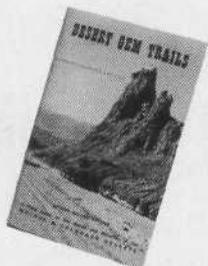
THE ROCKS BEGIN TO SPEAK by LaVan Martineau. The author tells how his interest in rock writing led to years of study and how he has learned that many—especially the complex petroglyphs—are historical accounts of actual events. Hardcover, well illustrated, glossary bibliography, 210 pages, \$8.95.

BOTTLE RUSH U.S.A. by Lynn Blumenstein. An excellent book for identifying old bottles with photographs of over 700 items and current price list. Background bottle information. 184 pages, paperback, \$4.25.

BAJA [California, Mexico] by Cliff Cross. Updated in 1972, the author has outlined in detail all of the services, precautions, outstanding sights and things to do in Baja. Maps and Photos galore with large format. 170 pages, \$3.50.

GHOSTS OF THE GLORY TRAIL by Nell Murbarger. A pioneer of the ghost town explorers and writers, Miss Murbarger's followers will be glad to know this book is once again in print. First published in 1956, it is now in its seventh edition. The fast-moving chronicle is a result of personal interviews of old-timers who are no longer here to tell their tales. Hardcover, illustrated, 291 pages, \$7.00.

BIRDS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN DESERTS by Gusse Thomas Smith. Thirty-one of the most commonly sighted birds of the Southwest are described and illustrated in 4-color artist drawings. Heavy paperback, 68 pages, \$3.95.



30,000 MILES IN MEXICO by Nell Murbarger. Joyous adventures of a trip by pick-up camper made by two women from Tijuana to Guatemala. Folksy and entertaining, as well as instructive to others who might make the trip. Hardcover, 309 pages, \$6.00.

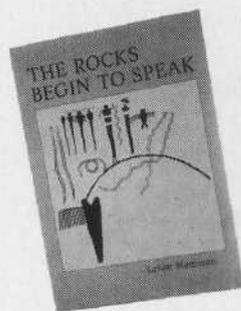
MY CANYONLANDS by Kent Frost. A vivid account of the early exploration of Utah's Canyonlands by the author who spent his entire life exploring America's new national park and who presently runs a guide service through the scenic country. Hardcover, artist illustrations, 160 pages, \$6.95.

COMMON EDIBLE & USEFUL PLANTS OF THE WEST by Muriel Sweet. A description with artist drawings of edible (and those not to touch) plants along with how Indians and pioneers used them. Paperback, 64 pages, \$1.50.

CALIFORNIA, An Illustrated History by T. H. Watkins. This 400-year epic of the Golden State, from the coming of the Spaniards to our challenging present, is not only colorful in historical fact, but in the many illustrations of the old and the new in picture and art form. It is considered the most beautiful and comprehensive pictorial treatment of the history of California ever received. Hardcover, 450 illustrations, 544 pages, limited quantity at special price of \$20.00

FACETING FOR AMATEURS by Glenn and Martha Vargas. All aspects of the craft are covered in this book from selecting, buying, orienting before cutting, methods of obtaining the largest and most perfect stone from the rough material, to the ways of using the many different faceting machines on the market. Glenn Vargas is Lapidary Instructor, College of the Desert, Palm Desert, Calif., and a columnist for *Desert*. Hardcover, many illustrations, tables, formulas, 330 pages, \$15.00.

DICTIONARY OF PREHISTORIC INDIAN ARTIFACTS OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST by Franklin Barnett. A highly informative book that both illustrates and describes Indian artifacts of the Southwest, it is a valuable guide for the person interested in archaeology and anthropology. Includes 250 major types of artifacts. Each item has a photo and definition. Paperback, 130 pages, beautifully illustrated, \$7.95.



ON DESERT TRAILS by Randall Henderson, founder and publisher of *Desert Magazine* for 23 years. One of the first good writers to reveal the beauty of the mysterious desert areas. Henderson's experiences, combined with his comments on the desert of yesterday and today, make this a MUST for those who really want to understand the desert. 375 pages, illustrated. Hardcover, \$6.95.

LOST MINES OF THE GREAT SOUTHWEST by John D. Mitchell. The first of Mitchell's lost mine books is now available after having been out of print or years. Reproduced from the original copy and containing 54 articles based on accounts from people Mitchell interviewed. He spent his entire adult life investigating reports and legends of lost mines and treasures of the Southwest. Hardcover, illustrated, 175 pages, \$7.50.

LOST MINES & BURIED TREASURES ALONG THE OLD FRONTIER by John D. Mitchell. The second of Mitchell's books on lost mines which was out-of-print for many years. Many of these appeared in *DESERT* Magazine years ago and these issues are no longer available. New readers will want to read these. Contains the original map first published with the book and one pinpointing the areas of lost mines. Mitchell's personal research and investigation has gone into the book. Hardcover, 240 pages \$7.50.

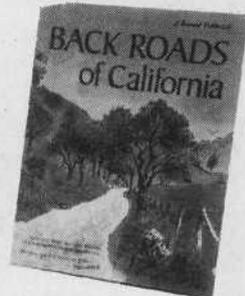
BACK ROADS OF CALIFORNIA by Earl Tholander and the Editors of *Sunset Books*. Early stagecoach routes, missions, remote canyons, old prospector cabins, mines, cemeteries, etc., are visited as the author travels and sketches the California Backroads. Through maps and notes, the traveler is invited to get off the freeways and see the rural and country lanes throughout the state. Hardcover, large format, unusually beautiful illustrations, 207 pages, \$8.95.

BAJA by Doug Richmond. Motorcycling's top authority on Baja California, Doug Richmond tells all there is to know in preparing for a two- or four-wheeled trip into this barren, but fascinating country. Each one of the 112 pages is crammed with authoritative information, including route and camping tips. Paperback, illustrated, 112 pages, \$4.00.

HANK AND HORACE by Richard Lillard and Mary Hood. How and why the tall-tale of Horace Greeley's ride with Hank Monk over the Sierra in 1859 became nationally significant in the folklore of the West is carefully documented with scholarly precision, historic perspective and earth-wise humor by the authors. Paperback, illustrated, \$5.95.

DESERT VACATIONS ARE FUN by Robert Needham. A complete, factual and interesting handbook for the desert camper. Valuable information on weather conditions, desert vehicles, campsites, food and water requirements. Information on desert wildlife, mines, ghost towns, and desert hobbies. Paperback, illustrated, 10 maps, 134 pages, \$3.95.

LOAFING ALONG DEATH VALLEY TRAILS by William Caruthers. Author Caruthers was a newspaper man and a ghost writer for early movie stars, politicians and industrialists. He "slowed down" long enough to move to Death Valley and there wrote his on-the-spot story that will take you through the quest for gold on the deserts of California and Nevada. Hardcover, old photos, 187 pages, \$4.25.



GHOST TOWN BOTTLE PRICE GUIDE by Wes and Ruby Bressie. A new and revised edition of their popular bottle book, first published in 1964. New section on Oriental relics, plus up-to-date values of bottles. Slick, paperback, illustrated, 124 pages, \$2.95.

TRAVEL GUIDE TO BAJA CALIFORNIA by Ken and Caroline Bates. Published by the Editors of *Sunset Books*, this is a useful book on Baja and should be a companion piece to Gerhard and Gulick's *Lower California Handbook* and Cliff Cross's *Baja by Road, Airplane and Boat*. The Bates' book takes the reader to the people with text, photographs and maps. Anyone going to Baja should have all three books. Large 8x10 format, heavy paperback, 80 pages, \$1.95.

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A Peek in the Publisher's Poke

THESE ARE troubled times in which we live, and the economy of the country is faced with one crisis after another. What with the energy problems, the paper industry and their ecology-related mill reduction, added to across-the-board postal rates increases, it was inevitable that *Desert Magazine* subscription and newsstand rates would have to be increased. Even though inevitable, it is with much regret that effective with this issue, such increases are implemented. The subscriber rate will amount to just over eight cents a month more, and the format will remain as it is now established, with 48 pages and the use of as much color photography as possible.

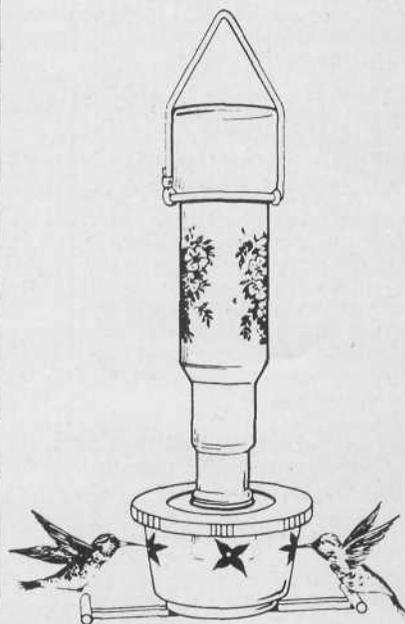
Desert will continue to cover the Southwest as it has for 37 years, and although some of the area may not be accessible to you in the immediate future, it is hoped that the magazine will provide reassuring reading now, and pleasurable participation later in another not so troubled time.

Now let's take a quick look at what's on tap in this issue. First, there has been a new development in the Pegleg Black Gold story. Check this out on Page 10. Harvey Gray tells about a phantom ship lost in the desert. Harold Weight weaves a story about a lost gold ledge, and Naturalist K. L. Boynton brings us up-to-date on the Desert Grey Fox.

Ernie Cowan tells about a charter boat trip in Baja, while Mary Frances Strong does a little detective work in Nevada's arid Ralston Desert. Betty Shannon takes us back in time to the discovery of riches in Panamint Valley, and an unusual spectacle of the Colorado River in Canyonlands Country is given full coverage by F. A. Barnes.

By golly, there's just about enough to make us forget these troubled times!

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Desert/April 1974



SOUTHERN IDAHO GHOST TOWNS

by Wayne Sparling

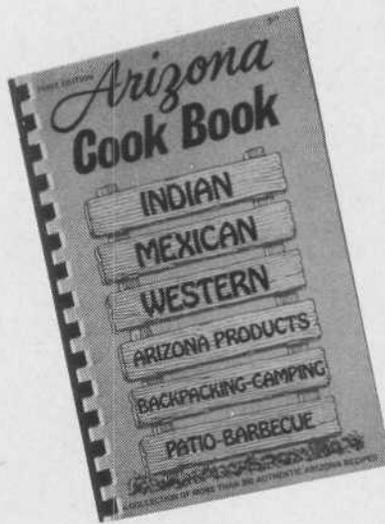
Scattered through the rugged deserts and mountains of southern Idaho are the remnants of towns that once were roaring mining centers. Most are true ghost towns, marked now by decaying cabins, the relics of ore mills, and machinery that ranges from abandoned tram cars to remarkably intact arrastras, used to crush raw ore. The author has visited these sites by pickup, by four wheel drive rig, and by foot. In this book, he describes eighty-four of them, discussing the history and highlights of each. Ninety-five photographs accompany the text, and maps detail the location of the camps. A welcome addition to the libraries of those fascinated by Western history.

APRIL, 1974 paper \$3.95



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Books for Desert Readers



ARIZONA COOK BOOK By Al and Mildred Fischer

One of the most interesting and unusual cookbooks to cross our desks is this newly-published comprehensive guide entitled, *Arizona Cook Book*. After searching 25 years for an all-inclusive Arizona cookbook, Al and Mildred Fischer decided to compile one themselves, and have certainly come up with a winner.

This five-cookbooks-in-one combination features recipes for Indian cooking, Mexican dishes, Western specialties, Arizona products and outdoor cooking. Each selection has original recipes, plus variations of southwestern favorites.

In the Indian section you will find half a dozen Fried Bread recipes, as well as other Indian-style foods including Backbone Stew, Mutton Loaf, Acorn Stew and Navajo Cake. Indian recipes have been selected from the Hopi, Papago, Navajo, Pima and Apache Tribes.

The Mexican section, with more than 75 selections, includes a glossary and a variety of recipes for guacamole, salsas, tacos, gazpacho, enchiladas and Mexi-

can *dulces*—sweets—which are sure to delight everyone.

Sourdough fans will want to experiment with four different sourdough starter recipes. Once the "pot" is set, there's pancakes, bread (long and short method), muffins, bread sticks, cookies and biscuit recipes to whet the appetite.

Pinto bean and chili enthusiasts will work up a western appetite after sampling Peggy Goldwater's beans, or Red Flannel Stew, or the dozen diverse chili recipes.

The Arizona section includes such local favorites as prickly pear jelly, cactus candy, date breads, Arizona fruitcake, chili pot roast, and many more.

"Outdoor Arizona" is the concluding section of the cookbook, with recipes for backpackers, barbecuers and campers. High-energy foods prepared at home are suggested, including Basic Trail Food, Beef Jerky, Pemmican, etc. For campers, there's Skillet Bread, Hobo Stew, Scones and Ember Cooking.

All in all, one of the most unique collections of hard-to-find real ol' western cooking available.

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Nina Paul Shumway

"YOUR DESERT AND MINE is a significant history of Riverside County's date culture from its origins to the present. To the collector of desert books, however, this is a book that deserves a place on the same shelf as classics by George Wharton James, J. Smeaton Chase, and Edmund C. Jaeger. Nina Paul Shumway has spent much of her life exploring the desert and she has the ability to evoke its variant moods with a lyricism tempered with the objectivity of a first-rate naturalist."—Harry W. Lawton in *Riverside Press-Enterprise*.

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DEATH VALLEY SCOTTY TOLD ME By Eleanor Jordan Houston

Death Valley Scotty! Who was he? Who was this tanned Kentuckian, turned California desert rat, dressed in blue suit, white hat, white shirt and red necktie, who could pull \$50,000 from one boot top and a like amount from the other to pay for a faster ride from Los Angeles to Chicago than anyone else ever had?

No matter. His exploits made headlines all over the country. Scotty was fa-

mous. He kept his name before the public for almost 50 years. He delighted in throwing gold pieces and silver into street crowds and in buying cigars and drinks with \$1000 bills. Interest grew when the \$3,000,000 edifice called Scotty's Castle rose in a remote canyon in northern Death Valley, California. Where did the money come from? Was there a mysterious angel backing Scotty's play? That was the mystery with which Scotty liked to clothe himself.

In 1948, Eleanor Jordan Houston and her ranger husband were Scotty's nearest neighbors in Death Valley. He was 76 years old when he asked Eleanor to write his story, and he loved telling it, reliving each escapade with keen enjoyment. Some of the stories he already had told over and over again to visitors at the castle, others he had never before told to anyone. Eleanor says, "I have tried to present Scotty as I knew him . . . the showman, the humorist, the philosopher, the master story teller."

Death Valley Scotty Told Me is attractively printed and bound in gold-toned leatherette cover paper, 116 pages, illustrated with drawings and photographs, \$1.75.

All books reviewed may be ordered from Desert Magazine Book Shop, Box 1318, Palm Desert, California 92260. Be sure to enclose check or money order and California residents must add 5% state sales tax



TALES OF THE OLD WEST

A set of 4 Charles M. Russell paintings is reproduced on deluxe quality paper for this splendid collection of lithographed prints. Full-color prints are packed in rugged, illustrated gift folder. Total print size measures 12"x16". Order "RP77-Tales of the Old West", \$7.50 per set of 4 prints, plus 45c postage. Or, write for FREE catalog of western notes, greeting cards, stationery, and gifts, plus a FREE SAMPLE card.

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quizzes and puzzles keep the youngsters entertained. At \$1.25 per copy, this is definitely a "must" for the Monument visitor and an ideal gift for the "arm-chair" traveler. Dealer inquiries welcome. (Calif. residents add 5% sales tax.)

DEAN PUBLICATIONS—P.O. Box 1545-D1, Palm Desert, CA. 92260.

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Photo Album of Yesterday's Southwest

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SUMMARY



MARCH 1965—The initial letter from Mr. Pegleg with two nuggets arrived at Desert Magazine office with the story of his "find" and subsequent disposal.

MAY 1965—A second letter and a nugget weighing two ounces, and answers to letters in April issue.

JULY 1965—Two more nuggets and replies to questions.

DEC. 1965—Two more nuggets and miscellaneous information regarding site of find.

AUG.-SEPT. 1965—Another nugget and answers to readers' questions.

AUG.-SEPT. 1966—More correspondence.

DEC. 1967—New letter with artifact and a theory on Peralta gold.

JULY 1968—More on the Peralta theory.

JAN. 1969—Last correspondence until April, 1974 issue.

Editor's Preface:

One of the most popular articles to appear in Desert Magazine was an anonymous reader who said that he had found Pegleg's Black Gold. To back up his claim, he enclosed two nuggets and a manuscript detailing the discovery and subsequent problems in handling the black gold. This began a series of questions and answers between other interested readers and the mystery man which continued until January of 1969, when the last letter was received. It has been over four years since we have heard from "Mr. Anonymous" and then, within two days of each other, the letters reprinted on these pages arrived in our Editorial Offices. One apparently from Mr. Pegleg, wherein he states dates that he mailed letters and nuggets. None were ever received, which makes the mystery deepen.

The other letter was from a "Slim Pickings," and he claims that he knows the identity of Mr. Pegleg and that the man in question passed away in 1971! He also remains anonymous and had mailed a manuscript and gold flakes to our office a year ago. This package was received, but it is imprudent to print every unsigned manuscript that comes across this desk. Therefore, it was filed away. No further word was heard from "Slim" until last week. There was not sufficient time to schedule his article in this issue, but it will appear next month.

We shall be glad to publish further correspondence from these two gentlemen, and the readers can then judge for themselves whether Mr. Pegleg has returned.

Dear Sir:

In reference to the "Black Gold" letter in the February '74 issue, and your answer that "Nothing has been heard from Mr. Anonymous since January, 1969," I think it is time to let you know I am still among the living, hale, hearty and healthy—and I've still got bags of the original black "Pegleg nuggets!"

If you still have my other letters, you will note that I am using a different typewriter. (The old Royal portable finally gave up the ghost, and my black gold investment proceeds are doing so well that I sprung for a new machine.)

Frankly, something happened back in 1969 that I still do not understand exactly. My "last" letter was published in the January issue, 1969. In that same issue appeared Victor Stoyanow's story,



Dear Editor:

Just a short note in reply to C. N. Cullimore (Feb. issue) regarding Mr. Pegleg. The reason nothing has been heard of this gentleman is because he passed away about July 1971. I was going to look up the exact month then decided not to because it would be a waste of time since DESERT wouldn't publish this information without proof. The reason I won't give his name now is because he left a widow and I know she doesn't want to be bothered answering letters regarding his black gold find.

At the time he began his series he was single and I believe he married either in 1969 or 1970. I could verify the exact date, but again I feel it is of little importance now.

In December 1972 I sent a manuscript to DESERT entitled, "Thimble Full of

RETTURNS...

"Black Bonanza," an excellent bit of research and intelligent reasoning, plus two letters in the Letters to the Editor column. I wrote a long letter, discussing Stoyanow's story in detail and answered DeWalt's Letter to the Editor. I enclosed the usual nugget and mailed the package to DESERT. Apparently you never received it.

I wrote again in May 1969 answering Miller's letter in that same issue, again enclosing the usual nugget. I wrote in November of 1969, answering Gilbert O. French's letter in detail, again enclosing a nugget.

When none of these were published, I could only assume you had not received my mailings, or possibly you were not interested in the "Black Gold" story any longer.

Finally, I wrote on July 11, 1970, stating among other things: "Presumably you never got the package which included another black nugget. Frankly, I've been afraid for quite a while that somebody was going to purloin one of the packages to get the nuggets. If not, then why haven't you received any of them?"

At that point, not knowing for sure what the score was, I could see no reason to send more letters and nuggets.

However, four full years have gone by now, and I've an idea that in this length of time a few more questions may have come to mind among the desert hands, and perhaps other information may have come to light on this same subject. For example, I noted Southworth's note in the August 1971 issue. Apparently he must have found my original discovery

site—and I've been mildly curious as to why he specifically wanted nuggets with micro-crystal faces.

Point is, if there is enough interest in the subject, I still don't mind answering questions. I won't include a nugget this time as I want to make sure the letter gets through—too many packages including nuggets simply disappeared before they got to DESERT. Somehow I'll figure a way to mail them so you will be sure to get them. On the other hand, what the hell, you probably have more than enough on hand now for display if you still have all I sent up to January 1969.

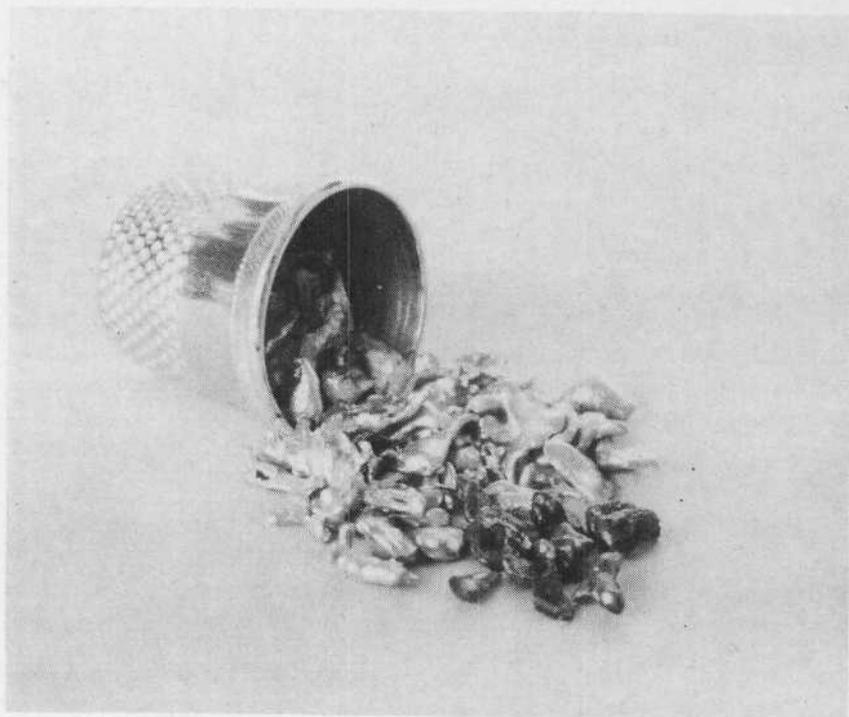
The Man Who Found
Pegleg's Black Gold

WHAT'S THE UP?

Black Gold" along with several nuggets. Apparently the story was no longer newsworthy since nothing came of it. I suppose the nuggets are still on display at DESERT. At the time of my writing about my find, I knew about the man who wrote the Pegleg story but decided to keep mum. Then, because my story was dead copy, I never made a follow-up of my letter of '72 about the final outcome of my desert find.

Sincerely yours,
"Slim Pickings"

"Slim Picking's"
Thimble Full
of Black Gold



GETTING THERE is easily half the fun of going to Panamint. But it hasn't always been that way.

Back in 1860, Dr. S. G. George, a silver seeker bent on relocating the fabled Lost Gunsight lode, slowly picked his way a mile or so into the west flank of the Panamint range. However, at that point, the vertical walls of the canyon he had chosen to explore abruptly close in, leaving a passage but a few yards wide.

Unnerved by the surprisingly narrow gorge, Dr. George began to suspect sinister motives in the behavior of his Indian guide. Fearing an ambush at each step, he turned around, commanded the Indian to walk in front of him, and the pair descended without incident to the safety of Panamint Valley's open salt flat.

Afterwards, Dr. George christened the steep walled defile, Surprise Canyon. Waiting undiscovered at the head of the canyon was an enticing outcropping of silver-bearing ore. The narrow passage, which the doctor had barely penetrated, later proved to be the only feasible route to Panamint and its riches.

Several years later, another pair of treasure hunters got a bit further up Surprise Canyon, when one man, for reasons unknown, turned on his partner and killed him on the spot.

Finally, in the winter of 1873, a trio of prospectors made it past all the obstacles, both real and imagined, to a point where the canyon suddenly widens into a picturesque little basin surrounded by pinyon-studded hills. There, in the limestone cliffs flanking both sides of the valley, they discovered greenish-blue veins of copper-silver ore.

When several rough assays showed values as high as \$2500 a ton, the three called a meeting, attended by 12 or 15 other men who had been prospecting, and in the case of one pair, hiding out, in the Panamints. On February 10, 1873, this group established the Panamint Mining District. The district's boundaries measured 20 miles on each side. Ranging from 266 feet below sea level to an altitude of over 11,000 feet, it included such diverse terrain as Death Valley's salt-encrusted mud flats and Panamint's snow-capped peaks. But Surprise Valley, the brush-carpeted depression at the head of Surprise Canyon, was to remain the center of activity in the district.

CANYON WITH A SURPRISE

by
**Betty
Shannon**

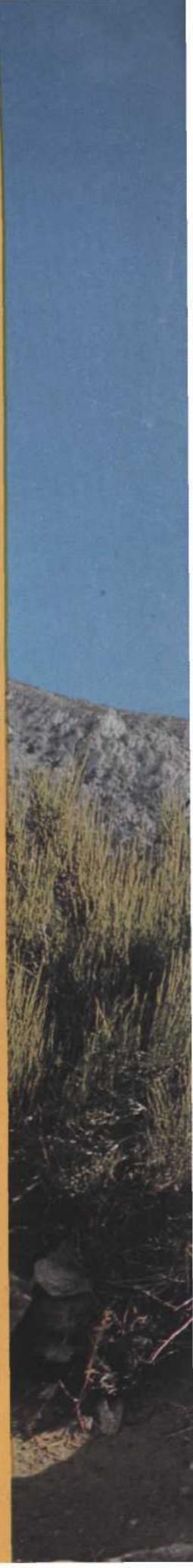
Two of the original locators, Richard Jacobs and Robert Stewart, filed claims; Jacobs' Wonder of the World and Stewart's Wonder. News of the discovery reached west coast newspapers, but because of its remote location and nearly impossible access, Panamint's boom was slow in building. The nearest road was 60 miles away in Owens Valley.

By the summer of 1874, Panamint sported the rudimentary elements of a frontier mining camp. A string of makeshift shelters lined both sides of a wide, vacant street. A big tent, known as Hotel de Bum, offered temporary housing to new arrivals. Dave Neagle, an entrepreneur from Pioche, Nevada, brought a small stock of whiskey and several glass tumblers. He laid a board across two barrels and opened for business as the Oriental Saloon.

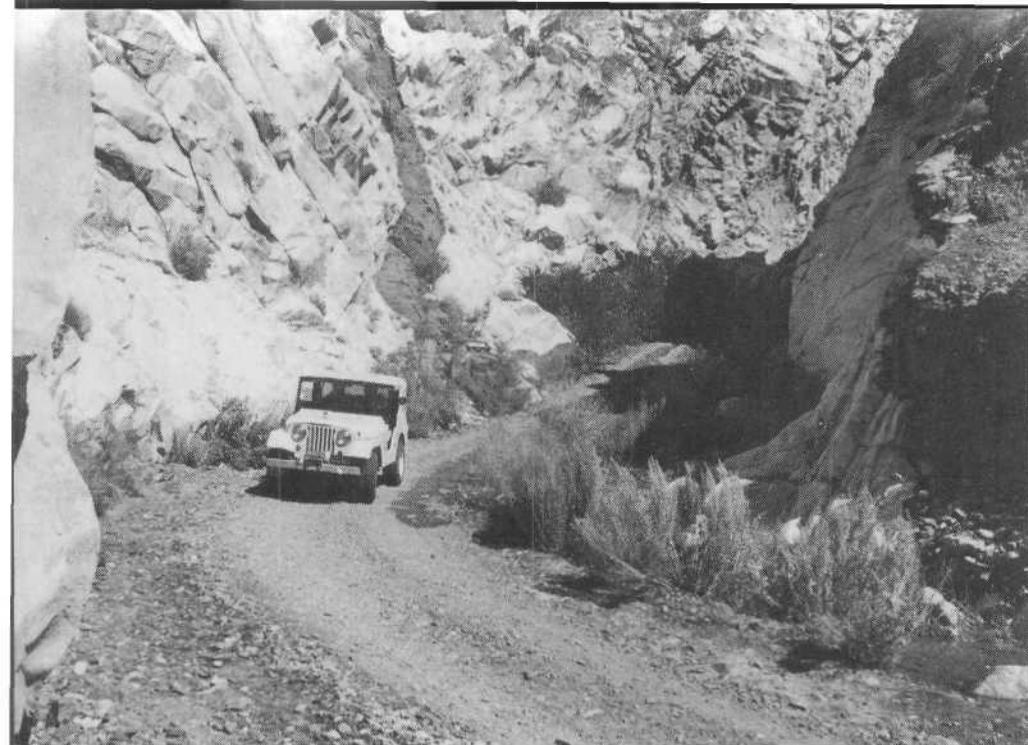
In the meantime, a promoter visited Los Angeles and raised enough cash to build a wagon road to connect Surprise Canyon with the Owens Valley. And of more immediate importance to the camp's future, work was begun on a toll road in Surprise Canyon. Its opening, on the 4th of July, was celebrated with a clap of gunpowder. A small, horse-drawn buggy made the first wheeled ascent of Surprise Canyon. Several

*The slender,
brick stack
of the
Surprise Valley
Mill
and Mining
Company's smelter
dominates
Panamint's
landscape.
Photo by
Howard Neal.*

Desert/April 1974







The towering limestone walls of Surprise Canyon nearly close in on the four-wheel-drive trail to Panamint City.

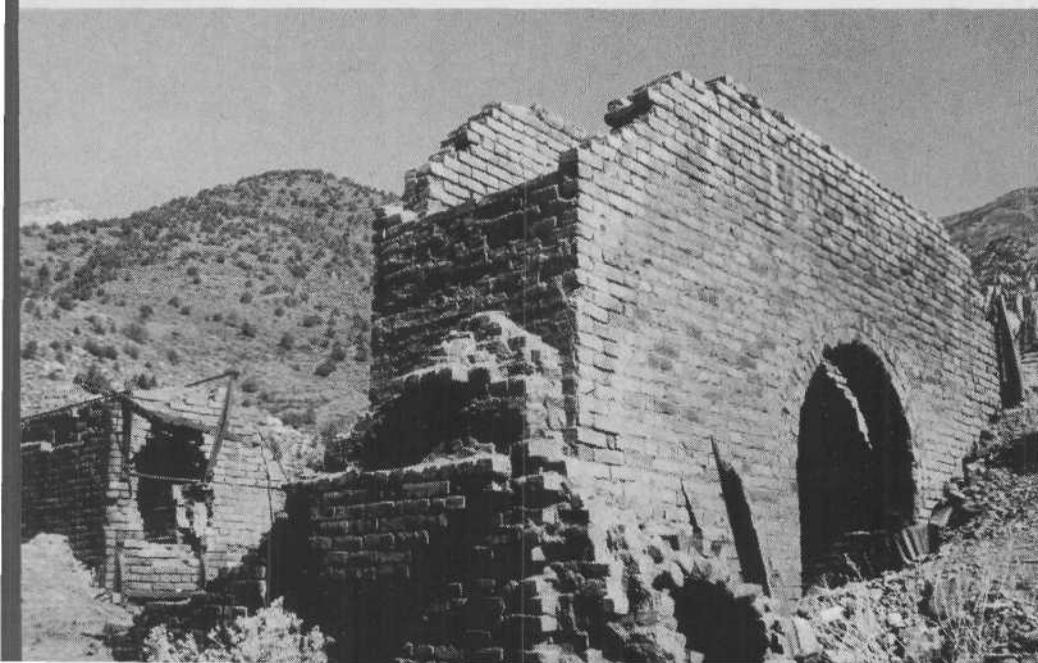
weeks later another boom echoed in the canyon. This time it was a clap of thunder which precipitated a cloudburst, wiping out those weeks of labor. However, the road was quickly rebuilt, and by the fall of 1874, the rush was on.

Many newcomers arrived via a tri-weekly scheduled stagecoach. One passenger's baggage included a small printing press and type. On Thanksgiving Day the *Panamint News* made its debut, announcing its intentions, "to furnish the people of Panamint with the latest news, to give the outside world accurate and truthful information regarding the

mines and district, and to make money."

Panamint's biggest boost came when Nevada's two senators, John P. Jones and William M. Stewart, invested heavily in its mines. They also became the new owners of the Surprise Canyon toll road for a reported \$30,000. Senator Jones' optimism led him to plunk an additional \$200,000 into a survey and preliminary work on a railroad to run from the bluffs of the Pacific, west of Los Angeles, across the Mojave desert, up Panamint Valley to the mouth of Surprise Canyon, and eventually on to Independence in the Owens Valley. So impressed

Ruins of the Surprise Valley Mill and Mining Company's smelter which produced silver bullion from August 1875 to May 1877.



with Jones' plans were his mine workers that some suggested renaming Panamint City, "Jonestown," in his honor.

Also impressed was *The Sacramento Union* which reported, "The lead owned by Stewart, Jones and Company is said to surpass, in richness and vastness, anything ever struck before west of the Rocky Mountains." Others were describing Panamint as "a second Washoe." But in Washoe, (Virginia City, Nevada), *The Territorial Enterprise* scoffed, "The ores found at Panamint are nearly all more or less base. The new mine is merely another opening in the Base-metal Range."

Panamint City reached the peak of its boom late in 1874. Main Street lots were priced at \$2500 to \$3000. There were more than 700 residents and almost as many mining claims. The mines employed 250 men. Shootings were not infrequent, providing adequate copy for the *Panamint News*.

Dave Neagle's business had outgrown his original plank and barrel bar. The Oriental Saloon moved into a new building with Inyo pine wainscoting, which from a distance of 10 feet, passed for selected oak. The wall behind the black walnut bar was decorated with an assortment of shapely ladies painted by an artist imported from Los Angeles. A massive billiard table was brought from San Francisco. To protect the innocent, a bullet-proof wall was constructed between Neagle's cardroom's and those of his competitor next door, Joe Harris' Occidental Saloon.

The ore, 10 tons a day, was sacked and stacked until freight wagons arrived to haul it down Surprise Canyon on the first leg of a journey half-way around the world to English smelters. But the ledger sheets showed that the high cost of transportation was wiping out the profits. The camp experienced its first setback in January, 1875, when some mines closed and miners were laid off.

However, Panamint City received an infusion of new money and a new lease on life in March. Twenty thousand shares of Jones and Stewart's Wonder Consolidated and Wyoming Consolidated properties were offered on the stock exchange in San Francisco at \$15 a share. Proceeds of the sale were used to purchase equipment for a smelter and 20-stamp mill.

Smoke first belched forth from the

tall, brick stack of the Surprise Valley Mill and Mining Company's smelter on a test run June 29, 1875. Five days later the town erupted in a wild celebration of both the nation's birthday and the mill's completion. Up on the hillside, the 20 stamps noisily clattered and the steam whistle screamed.

Actual production began at the mill in August, but there was still a major problem. Wells Fargo had refused to carry out Panamint's silver bullion. The trip down Surprise Canyon was just too risky, the chance for an ambush too great. And in addition, it was a well known fact that John Small and John McDonald, a pair of highwaymen who had attended the original organizational meeting of the Panamint Mining District and had hung around Panamint ever since, had pointedly been making inquiries about the first shipping date.

Quietly an ingenious plan was devised. The silver was cast as cannon balls, each weighing about 450 pounds. The first shipment of five cannon balls were loaded aboard a wagon, and rumbled down Surprise Canyon, trusted to the care of a single, unarmed driver. As was expected, Small and McDonald stopped the wagon in the canyon, but when they saw the load they knew they had been beaten.

However, a series of other problems affecting Panamint's future proved insurmountable. Far from Surprise Canyon's steep walls, a financial panic was sweeping California. A leading bank had failed, the price of silver was declining, and mining stocks, including those of the Comstock lode, plummeted. Financially squeezed, Senator Jones called a halt to all work on his pet project, the Los Angeles and Independence railroad. And in the hills above Surprise Valley the ore veins pinched out.

By October, Panamint was well on its way to becoming a ghost camp. Most of its residents, including the editor of the *Panamint News*, packed up and moved across Panamint Valley to the new excitement at Darwin in the Argus range. Dave Neagle made one last attempt to save the town and his Oriental Saloon by spearheading a futile movement to set up a new county with Panamint as the seat of government.

Early in 1876, a rich ore body was discovered, keeping the stamps of the big mill dancing awhile longer. But by

this time, there were no scheduled stages and mail was delivered only once a week.

In July, almost two years to the day that a cloudburst had washed out the just-completed Surprise Canyon toll road, a four-hour downpour deluged Panamint City. The subsequent flood struck the final blow to the camp's precarious existence. Water swirled through saloons, stores, the deserted Bank of Panamint, carrying furniture, boots, trees and boulders down Surprise Canyon. In May, 1877, Jones ordered the last mines closed and the stamps of the Surprise Valley Mill and Mining Company fell silent.

The mill's slender, brick stack still dominates Surprise Valley's landscape, an enduring monument to the lively days of a century ago. Clusters of stone walls, the ruins of miners' cabins, blend into the brushy slopes. Modern mining methods have been tried several times this century, and a few structures remain from these sporadic attempts to revive Panamint's ghost.

The road up Surprise Canyon probably is in better shape now than during Panamint's heyday, but don't attempt the trip

unless you have a four-wheel-drive rig. The grade is very steep and the trail can be rough in some spots.

To ascend Surprise Canyon, turn right off the Wingate Road, about one mile north of Ballarat. Just before reaching the narrows, and on the right side of the canyon, a grove of cottonwood trees shades a broad, bench-like area. This is the site of Chris Wicht's camp. Here, single-handedly, the one-time Ballarat saloon keeper built his house, several cabins which he rented to tourists for a dollar a day during the depression days of the 1930s, and a swimming pool 75 feet long. Chris claimed he built the pool "big enough so a frog could get a swim." The steady flow of water also provided power for nine electric lights. The buildings have vanished, but the frog pond remains.

Beyond Chris Wicht's camp, the canyon's walls nearly meet; in some places it's a mere 15 feet from side to side. Trickling water forms cool, green pools at the base of the towering limestone walls. The route to Panamint is as spectacular as its brief history. Total distance from the road's junction in Panamint Valley to Panamint City is 11 miles. □

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Dominating the landscape of the Ralston Desert, the giant massif of Stonewall Mountain rises to nearly 8400 feet. "Dust devils" often scamper across the elongated playa which separates the giant mountain from the Cuprite Hills.

NEVADA'S STO

DURING A stop in Tonopah several years ago, we were told a tale about a beautiful oasis on Nevada's arid Ralston Desert. It was an intriguing story. High in a narrow cleft, on the side of a volcanic mountain, a waterfall cascaded into a deep pool. It provided a year 'round watering place for wildlife and man. "The site can only be reached via a very rugged four-wheel-drive trail and is known to but a few old-timers," said the story-teller.

Naturally, our interest was aroused and we wanted to see this phenomenon for ourselves. "You couldn't find it if I told you. You would need a guide and, anyway, I have sworn to keep it a secret," was his reply to our inquiry. Privately, we wondered if this might not be

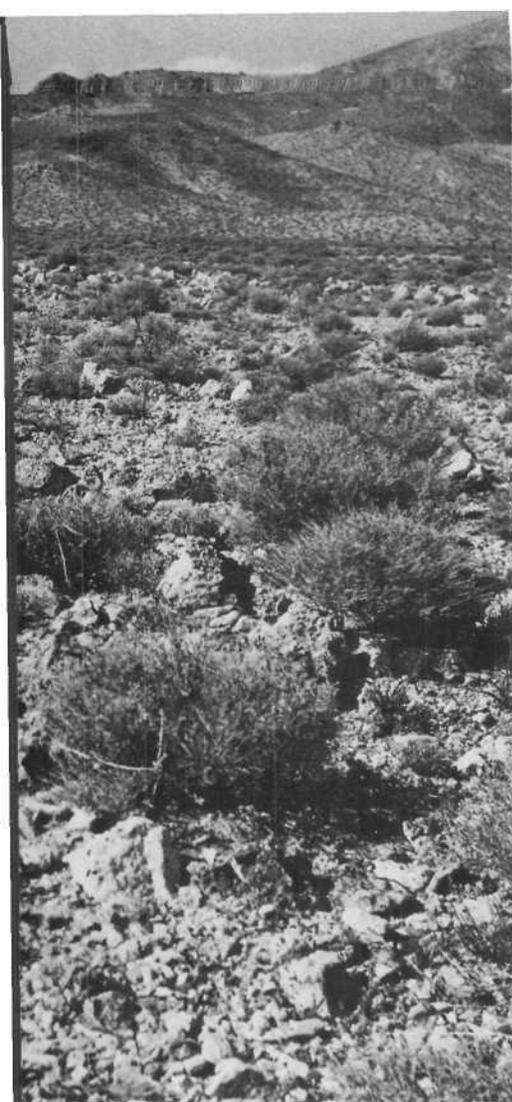
one of those "yarns" people like to spin around the campfire.

Each time we were in the area on subsequent trips, the story about the falls was recalled. Knowing the desert can be deceptive and hides her treasures well, we were also aware you often find what you least expect. It seemed quite possible such an oasis existed and finding the "lost waterfall" became a challenge. Though it took a bit of detective work, find it we did! The reward was two-fold—a charming oasis, plus the source of some attractive agate.

Our quest began with local inquiry, since we were without any directions and the Ralston Desert encompasses a large area of Nye County. Much to our surprise, we hit "pay dirt" at once. We

learned there was a waterfall about 25 miles southeast of Goldfield. Initially, we didn't talk to anyone who had been there, but it became quite obvious the falls were well-known to local folks.

It was at this point I realized the original story-teller had unknowingly dropped an important clue when he described the falls as "in a narrow slit in high volcanic rocks." Upon learning their approximate location, my memory bell began to ring. I recalled a photo of a fault scarp on the north side of Stonewall Mountain I had seen in a 1900 mining report. A quick check of the topo map indicated a spring at this location. "Jerry, that is the only logical place the falls could be," I told the other half of the team. "Let's check it out tomorrow,"



Left: The road traverses Stonewall Flat near the base of the Cuprite Hills. Good specimens [rocks in foreground] of agate, chalcedony and chert will be found along both sides of the road. Above: Stonewall Falls has long provided water for man and wildlife in this arid region. Photos by Jerry Strong.

NEWALL FALLS

by Mary Frances Strong

was his reply.

Later the same evening, we visited William Metchner, of Tonopah, to see his fine collection of Nevada memorabilia. Bill is a native Nevadan and has spent many years exploring the old townsites and mines. Just before leaving I mentioned the falls. "Yes, I have been there," he told us. "You will find it a most interesting area." He also confirmed my conclusion about the location.

Armed with hazy directions, since few people take mileages, we were off the next day to find the falls. The region was not new to us, as we had previously located a gem field on Stonewall Flat. I knew I would recognize the cleft, so felt the area would be easy to find. As it turned out, it wasn't quite that simple.

New roads are always appearing on the desert and we soon found many new ones on Stonewall Flat. Rocks from a quarry there had been used in the recent widening of Highway 95. A heavy rain earlier in the month had made a quagmire of the playa separating Stonewall Mountain from the Cuprite Hills. The route Bill had indicated was muddy and slick with several deep troughs filled with water. Four-wheel-drive became a necessity. After considerable skirting around, we finally circumvented the hazards and reached a good road on higher ground.

We drove slowly east and watched for the cleft. Unfortunately, the northern bulwark of Stonewall Mountain lay in dark shadows.

"It's going to be tough to get photographs," Jerry grumbled. When a slight change in the silhouette appeared, we stopped to take a closer view with binoculars. The shadows made detail difficult, but we decided it could be the cleft. On our right, a little-used trail seemed to head straight for the possible site. We followed it for some distance, but decided this must have been an old road and not the one presently used.

Returning to the main road, we noticed a graded road coming down from the Cuprite Hills to join the one we were traveling. We speculated this would be a better route to use going out since it missed the wet, muddy areas at the lower end of the playa. Chunks of rusted metal along the roadside had also been

BURIED TREASURE

LOCATE IT FROM
A LONG DISTANCE

With my sensitive

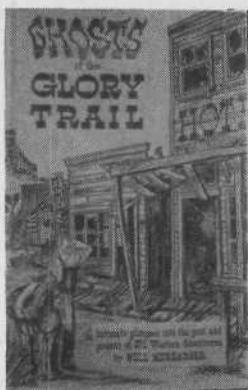
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noted and, as we continued east, they began to appear in greater frequency.

"They could be practice bombs as we must be pretty close to the old bombing range," Jerry commented. Noting a rather large one, we walked over to inspect it. Deeply imbedded in a crater-like hole, it was an ugly reminder of World War II.

Less than a mile from the road junction, a fence and sign, "Gunnery Range, Keep Out" were encountered. We had missed the road to the falls. Bill had emphasized it lay west of the military range boundary. Retracing our route back to the junction, we couldn't see a road or even tracks leading south. After the second time around, a little "foot work" seemed in order.

Hiking south, we came upon a well-defined road heading for the mountains. A section of the lower end had been obliterated by runoff from a heavy storm. Heading back to the car, we were quickly on our way. Ahead, the cleft was readily distinguishable. With our goal in sight, I was as excited as a kid, since it is the "chase" I enjoy—tracking down and exploring a locale. "Old Dad" was his us-

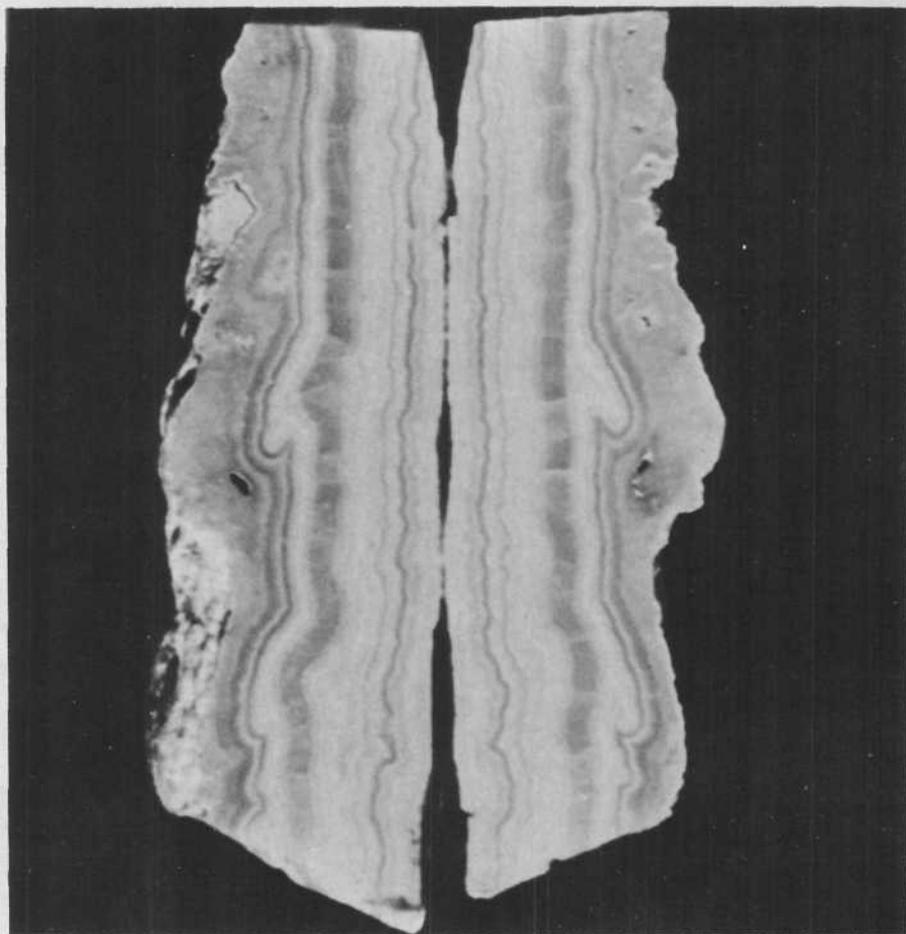
ual calm, cool self, but I could sense he, too, was anxious to zero in on our quarry.

After traveling up-slope nearly two miles, our road suddenly butted against another on the bank of a deep wide wash. The section on our right had seen little recent use. We were almost certain this was the original trail and the one we had started to follow earlier. Turning left, we had our first good view of Stonewall Falls.

The steep escarpment of rhyolite rose about 500 feet. At its base, an old cabin was diminished to toy size. The cleft, almost grotto-like, was not too large—approximately 30 feet wide at the entrance and not more than 15 feet deep. The lower half of the cliffs on each side of the falls had a mottled white facing which stood out in sharp relief against the dark mountains.

We parked at the cabin and walked over to the cleft. Pleasant sounds of water falling and the pungent fragrance of moisture on desert plants seemed unreal in this arid setting. Halfway up the escarpment, water flowed out of an opening in solid rock. It made a sheer drop, then bounced from rock to rock into a

Very attractive specimens of agate are to be found at Stonewall Falls.



shallow pool which emptied into the wide wash to form a small pond. Nearby, an old cattle pen and loading ramp indicated the area had been used as cattle range in "wet" years.

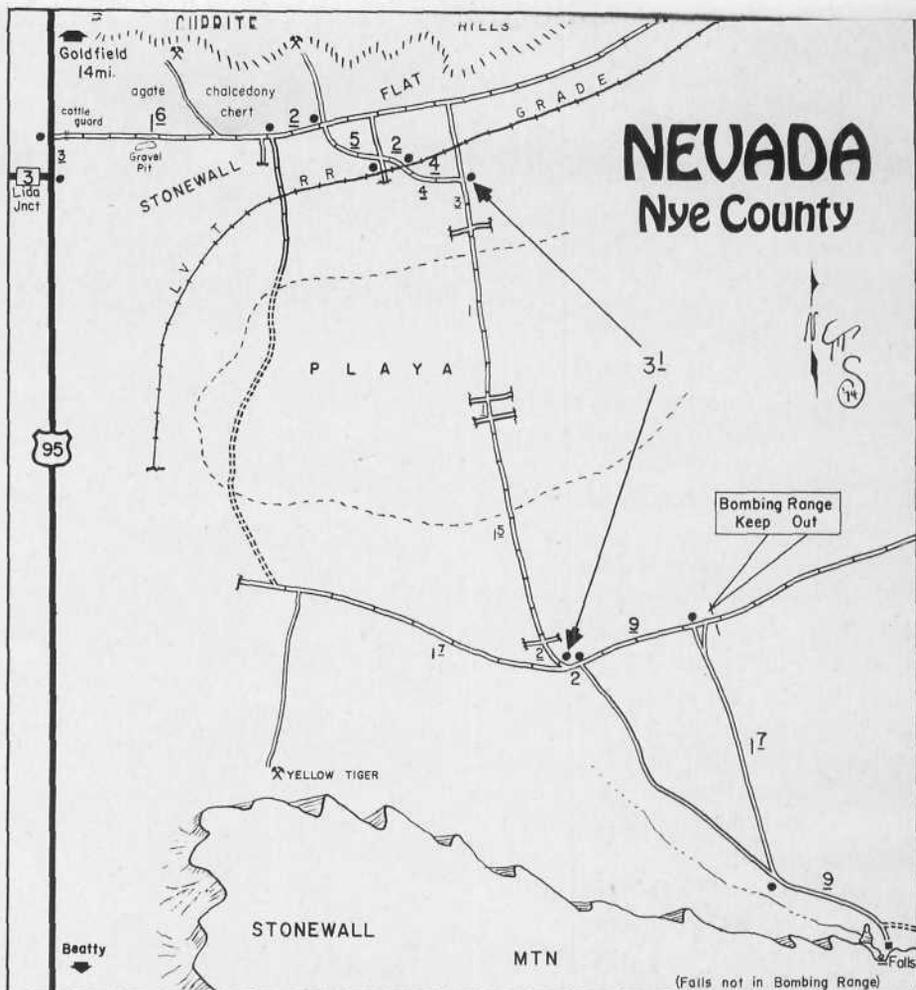
It was an unexpected surprise to find the white facing on the cliffs was a deposit of seam agate. A considerable amount of material had eroded from the cliffs and made small talus slopes at their base. As you might expect, it is not brilliantly colored but ranges in degrees of white to clear. Changes of color density in the layers give an effect of light blue, tan, purple and gray along with varying degrees of white. The patterns are very attractive and include banded, swirls, tubular, frost and cloudy. Some of the agate contained black dendrites.

Intact, seam pieces have one very flat side, the opposite side displaying irregularly rounded knobs covered by a thin layer of common opal. The agate is translucent with dense layers, and a good deal of it is vuggy. However, good, cuttable specimens can readily be collected.

Exploration of the immediate environs disclosed memorabilia from the past—an old mill site, the remains of a wagon, square nails and bits of purple glass. While picturesque, the aging cabin appeared incongruous in this setting. Its high, false-front was typical of business buildings in early mining days. Obviously man had made considerable use of the falls before the turn-of-the-century.

We knew the region had been heavily prospected in 1904-05, resulting in gold and silver discoveries on Pahute Mesa (9 miles east) and what became the Stonewall Mining District. The latter encompassed the falls and northwestern section of Stonewall Mountain. Like so many other strikes, the Stonewall District didn't prove to be a bonanza. Leasees operated spasmodically and only small ore shipments were made. During the 1920s, the Yellow Tiger Mining Company undertook considerable development work which included a lengthy tunnel. Their former camp is locally referred to as "Tiger Town."

Stonewall Falls provided a dependable source of water for mining camps in the immediate area, claim owners in the Cuprite Hills and the camp of Gold Crater on Pahute Mesa. In fact, the latter's residents made plans to lay a nine-mile pipeline from the falls to supply their camp.



This and other grandiose plans quickly dissipated when the predicted boom failed to materialize.

There are many reasons to believe the water from Stonewall Falls was used and a nearby claim or two worked at a much earlier date than the strikes of 1904-05. Possibly such activities occurred during the 1860s and '70s when important discoveries were being made at Gold Mountain, Oriental, Lime Point (now Gold Point) and Montezuma.

Enjoying a coffee break by the pool, Jerry and I felt our efforts to visit Stonewall Falls had been very rewarding. It was, indeed, an oasis and should be considered one of the desert's treasures. However, we had some sobering thoughts upon noting how people had despoiled the site's natural beauty. Cans and assorted trash were everywhere. We will never be able to understand how people can be so uncaring about their natural resources. It is our fervent hope that a local civic or youth group will undertake a "cleanup day" and restore the pristine beauty of Stonewall Falls.

By now, the winter sun had swung low in the sky. It was time to go, but we were

reluctant to do so. In finding Stonewall Falls we had found another challenge—delving into the earlier history of the area. Once again it was an exciting new game with only a few clues. We had also learned the "storyteller" had been right—it was a lovely desert oasis.

We were even happier to have learned there were many discrepancies in his story. Stonewall Falls, while not familiar to the general public, is well-known to local folks. It is easy to find and four-wheel-drive is not needed. Nevadans have always been most generous in sharing their natural treasures with visitors. Obviously, our "storyteller" didn't feel this way. He preferred to spin a fascinating yarn about a "secret waterfall" only a few people had been privileged to see.

Jerry and I were very glad we heard the tale. Our search was exciting and the rewards unmeasurable. With the energy crisis now upon us, it may not be possible to return to Stonewall Falls for several years. However, there is great comfort in knowing the Ralston Desert is waiting. The falls will be there providing life-giving water for wildlife and a place of quiet solace for man. □

BAJA FOR

IT WAS probably the hundredth time someone had shouted, "there she blows," and I just couldn't get excited at the sight of another whale.

We had been on the Sea of Cortez for nearly a week, touching many points of interest along Baja's scenic desert coast, and were now cruising through the Canal de las Ballenas, or channel of whales.

We had seen whales by the dozen, and as I lay on deck reading, I couldn't generate the interest to get up to see one more. But I did glance up from my book to see the hulking beast dive. He had surfaced about 200 yards to port, but now he was sounding.

Suddenly, our boat, the 100-ton Santa Monica, was jolted by a smashing blow. Those on the bow gasped as we hit. There was a chattering of voices and I realized we had collided with the whale.

The incident seemed to generate only excitement, until we began to realize the size and weight of the animal that had been struck. Had he caused any damage to our boat? Captain Jose Martinez slowed our craft and we put in to a scenic desert bay known as Bahia de Las Animas to check for damage.

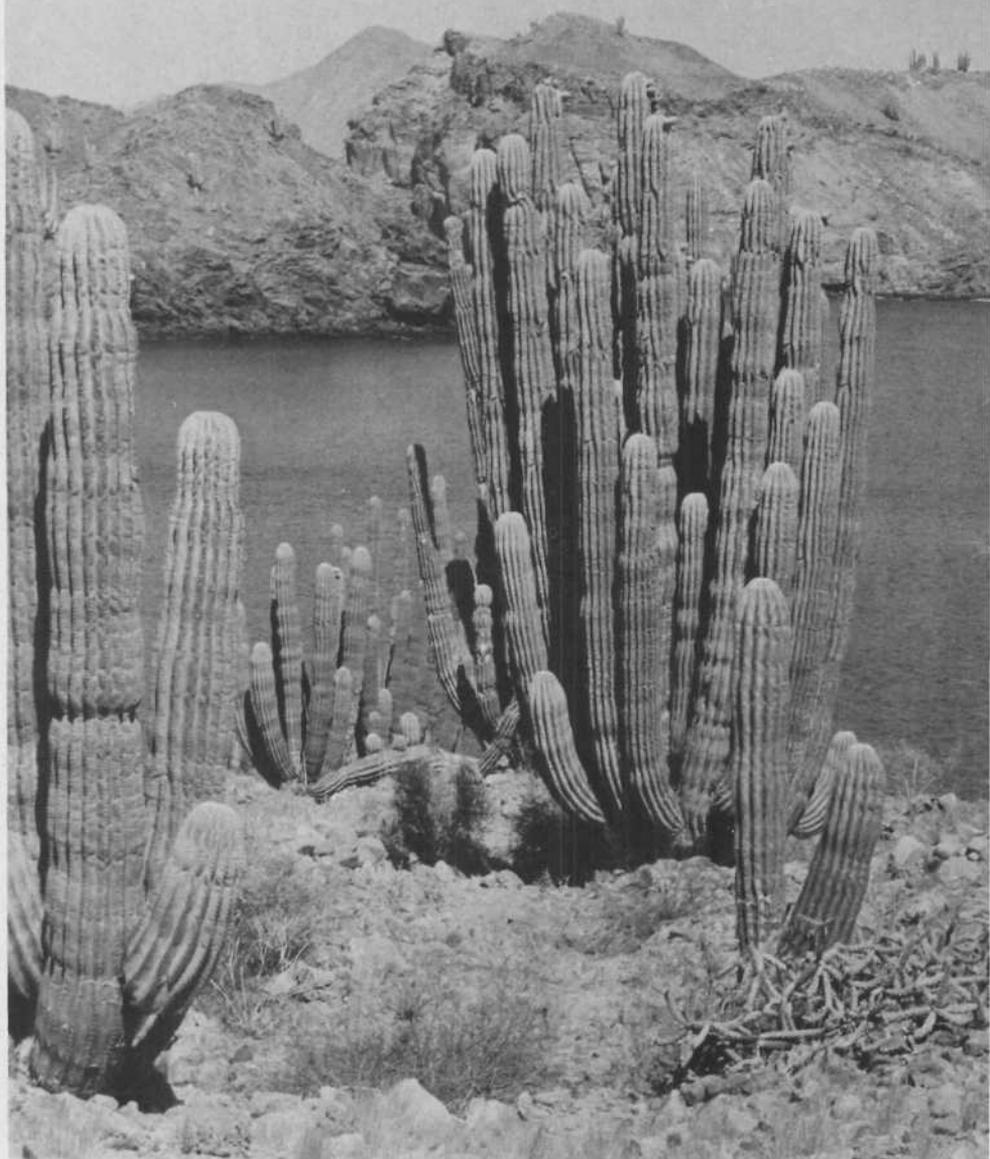
Anchoring in the lee of a small rock-pile islet, crowned with an osprey nest, we put on diving gear and went into the water to see what damage had been done to the Santa Monica.

We found the impact of the huge mammal had compressed the spine of the ship about a quarter-inch at the water line. There was a small leak, but this was easily patched with some mud-like epoxy cement. We were glad we were not going faster than 11 knots when we struck the whale. It could have been a much more serious problem.

Since Las Animas was a sheltered bay, we decided to spend the night there to let the cement set and to dive and explore the clear, warm waters.

To the west, the rugged desert coast of Baja gave us a beautiful show of color and shadow as the sun set that evening over high, arid peaks. To the east, we were entertained by the aerial dynamics of pelicans as they dove into the water for fish.

The Santa Monica anchored in Refugio Bay at the northern tip of Guardian Angel Island



This was just one high point in a week of adventure being shared by our group of 18 Californians on vacation. We had chartered the Santa Monica out of San Felipe and were exploring the desert islands of the Gulf of California, the remote eastern coast of the Baja peninsula, and diving in the life-rich waters of the sea.

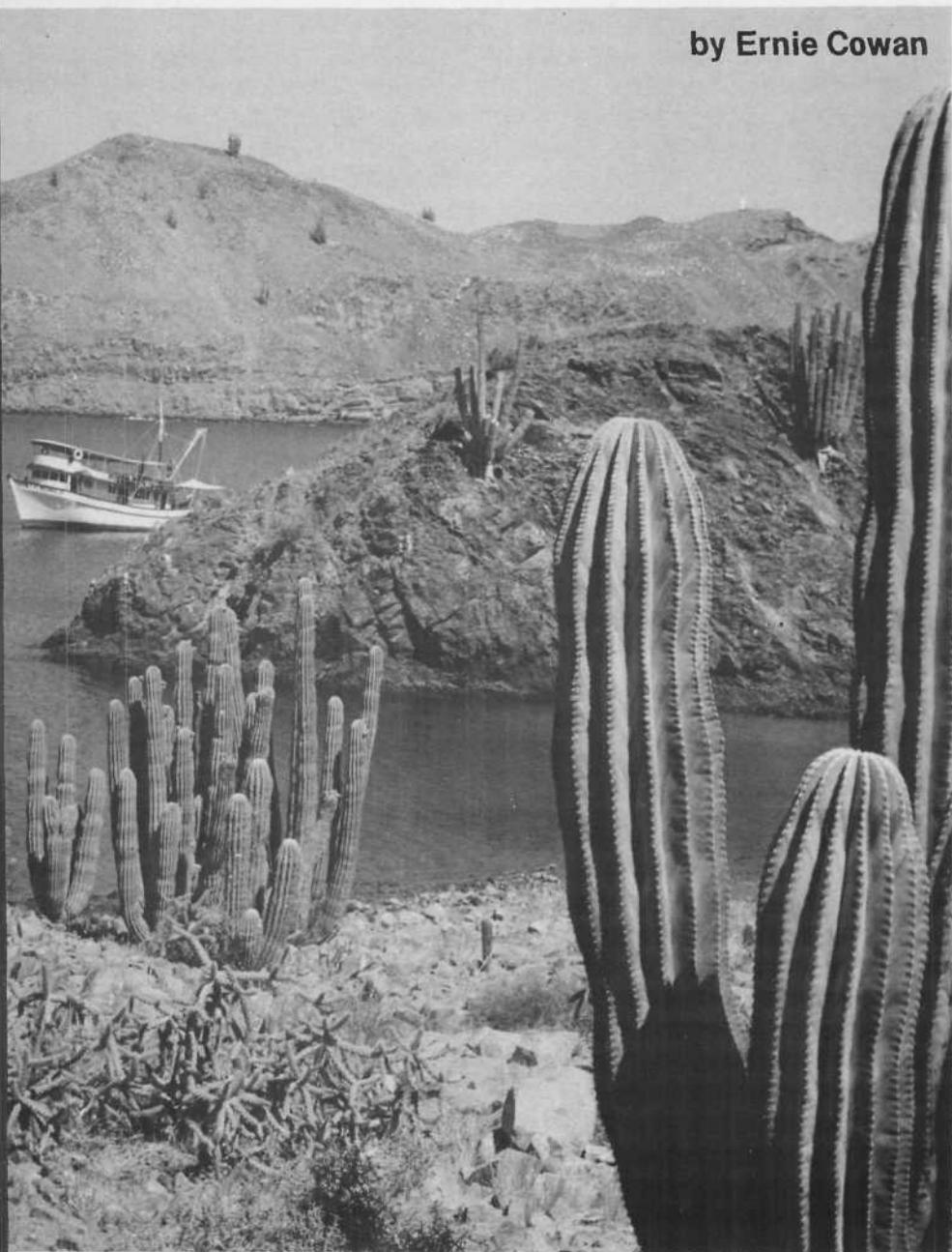
As a newspaper reporter who had been into the Baja wilderness many times, I was invited along to chronicle our expedition.

Ours was not to be an unusual trip, but something anyone can arrange for a group of similar size. There is quite a fleet of fishing boats that home port in San Felipe, about 125 miles south of Mexicali. They range in size from small shrimp boats, to larger ones, such as ours which measured 75 feet in length.

The *captains* of these boats are finding it is more profitable escorting tourists than fishing, and there is less work. So, San Felipe is growing into a major jump-off point for groups seeking adventure in

CHARTER

by Ernie Cowan



the Sea of Cortez.

Our trip cost \$185 per person for eight days. That included food and a Mexican fishing license, in addition to the boat. The food, I might add, was outstanding.

The waters of the Vermillion Sea are so teeming with life, they offer a constant variety show of animal wonders. One of the most spectacular of these wonders was the light show we enjoyed each night, courtesy of friendly porpoise.

Almost all of the time we were escorted on our journey in the gulf by schools

of porpoise, at times 500 or more. They would swim with our boat, often only inches from the plowing bow, crisscrossing and jumping to our delight.

But the show was most spectacular at night when the porpoise would activate phosphorescent organisms that abound in the warm gulf waters. As the porpoise would swim, the glow from these microscopic organisms would outline their body so they could be clearly seen in the water. It was a breathtaking sight.

After starting our trip from San Fe-

lippe, our first port was at the southeast end of Isla Del Angel de la Guarda, the second largest island in the gulf. This is supposed to be a ghost island, uninhabited and with no known water. It is supposed to be populated only by giant lizards, rattlesnakes by the square foot and strange plants. There are stories of rich gold mines, hidden in the towering desert peaks of the island.

Before our trip was over, we would be able to explore both ends of the island. We found at least one of the stories of Guardian Angel Island to be true.

At the south end of Guardian Angel, we found little that was different from typical desert environment. But I do think I found a canyon that the great desert artist, John Hilton, wrote about in a December, 1959 issue of *Desert Magazine*. Hilton called this gorge Whispering Canyon, and a painting of the canyon appeared on the November, 1959 cover of *Desert Magazine*. His directions to the canyon were not explicit, but from the description, I'm fairly sure I found the right place.

In his account, Hilton encountered a rattlesnake on the island. None of our group ran across any of the buzztails while exploring. I'm sure there are plenty of rattlers on the island, but no more than there would be in other desert environments.

As I said, some of the stories of Guardian Angel are true, and one that we confirmed was about the "giant lizards."

On our way back to San Felipe, we spent a night anchored in the snug little cove known as Bahia Refugio at the northern tip of the island. We decided to take most of the next day to explore the area, so early in the morning I took a small boat and went ashore alone to hike and take pictures at my leisure.

The islands off the Baja coast are an extension of the same arid terrain found on the peninsula. But because of an unusually wet winter, the islands were carpeted with a blanket of grass and small plants. The strange elephant trees were decked out in beautiful coral-colored flowers.

The dark volcanic rocks of the island



also created an aesthetic background of contrasts, making the white-barked elephant trees stand out vividly.

I was really enjoying my hike. The morning was warm, but not hot, and the peace and quiet of the island was captivating. As I had come ashore in the boat, I had noticed a deep canyon running from the mountains down to the bay. I decided to hike over to the canyon to see what it might have to offer.

Approaching the rim, I heard a noise something like a bean bag falling on the ground. I looked around, but saw nothing. Then there was another, and several more similar sounds, but again I saw nothing. Walking a few steps farther along the canyon rim, the sounds increased until I finally discovered what it was. The noise was being made by iguanas falling out of the elephant trees.

Apparently, these three-foot lizards were sunning themselves in the trees that lined the canyon. When I arrived, they would drop to the ground in fear and flee to the safety of underground

shelters. By the time I realized what was happening, all of the lizards were gone, or so I thought.

A short distance up the canyon I saw one lizard still in a tree. I set my camera and began to creep closer and closer in hopes of getting a picture. He didn't move a muscle. When I got to within about two feet of the reptile, I decided it must be dead. Here was a wrinkled old sunbaked body, draped over prickly branches of an elephant tree.

He must have cashed in his chips while enjoying the warm desert sun, I thought. Oh well, it would give me a chance to get some good close-up pictures of the big lizard, anyway.

I reached up to grab the carcass and about that time, Old Mr. Iguana woke up. I'm no sure who was scared most, but we both dashed off in different directions. I'm not afraid of lizards, but being startled by the biggest I had ever seen was a little unnerving.

Later, with reinforcements, we managed to capture several of the beasts for

pictures. They turned out to be rather docile creatures.

It was in this same bay of Refugio that I witnessed one of the most beautiful sights ever. I have seen many spectacular sunrises, but the one here, on our last morning, was very special and I almost missed it.

Anyone who has traveled much in the gulf knows about the great sunrises that are a regular part of the scene. Well, every morning of our trip I had been summoned on deck to "look at the great sunrise."

Most had been beautiful, but similar, so when my fellow voyagers aroused me at 5:30 that last morning, I mumbled some grumbles and decided I was not going to get up. But they kept insisting, so I crawled on deck and was stunned by the sight before me.

The rising sun was silhouetting the tip of the island and rays of gold were fanning across an azure sky. At first I could only gaze in wonderment, forgetting completely about my camera. The scene

Far left: Vagabundos getting fresh water from the Santa Monica in Las Animas Bay.
 Left: Vagabundo and Santa Monica crewman [right] hold up part of days catch from the Sea of Cortez.
 Right: Heermann's Gulls and Elegant Tern chicks on the island of Raza.



seemed to hang forever, though, and I did get some pictures for a lasting memory of the sunrise over Guardian Angel Island.

While we had many interesting adventures at both ends of Guardian Angel, I think the smallest island we visited was the most interesting. That was a barren rock pile only a half-mile square, known as Raza Island.

Raza seems like a God-forsaken place, and for man it is. But for two species of birds, Raza is an ancestral home.

Each year the Elegant Tern and Heermann's Gull come to the island to nest and raise their young. The island is the birthplace of about 90 percent of these two bird species.

Recognizing the importance of the island, the Mexican government declared it a bird sanctuary in 1964 at the urging of a biologist from the United States. Before that, the island had been subjected to periodic raids by guano and egg hunters and the birds were suffering because of it.

What was so interesting about the island was the number of birds that crowd onto it. We were there late in the season and most of the birds had left, but there were still hundreds of thousands of tern chicks.

The only signs of man on Raza were an old building built for a caretaker who

lives there during nesting season, and a weathered old cross marking a grave on a wind-swept point of the island. The cross reminded us that there is no place in the life-rich gulf that is not touched by man.

One reason for that is because there is a band of fishermen, numbering perhaps 300, who live on and from the Sea of Cortez. These fishermen are known as *Vagabundos del Mar*, gypsies of the sea. They are a breed of totally free people. Their lives are guided by the winds and tides of the gulf.

Most visitors to the Gulf of California never see a *vagabundo*, but we would be fortunate to meet two of them. They appeared from nowhere and came alongside our boat as we were anchored in Las Animas. They wanted water and were willing to pay for it with products from the sea.

Our Captain made the arrangements and at dawn the next day the *vagabundos* returned with a 55-gallon drum to fill with fresh water. They left behind some fish and two sea turtles that would be prized for food.

These lonely fishermen answered our questions, but seemed reluctant to talk. As soon as they completed their mission, they returned to the sea, soon vanishing on the horizon in their small boat. Captain Martinez said the *vagabundos* are

solitary in nature, making contact only when necessary. Most of their needs are provided by the sea and they wish to be obligated to no one.

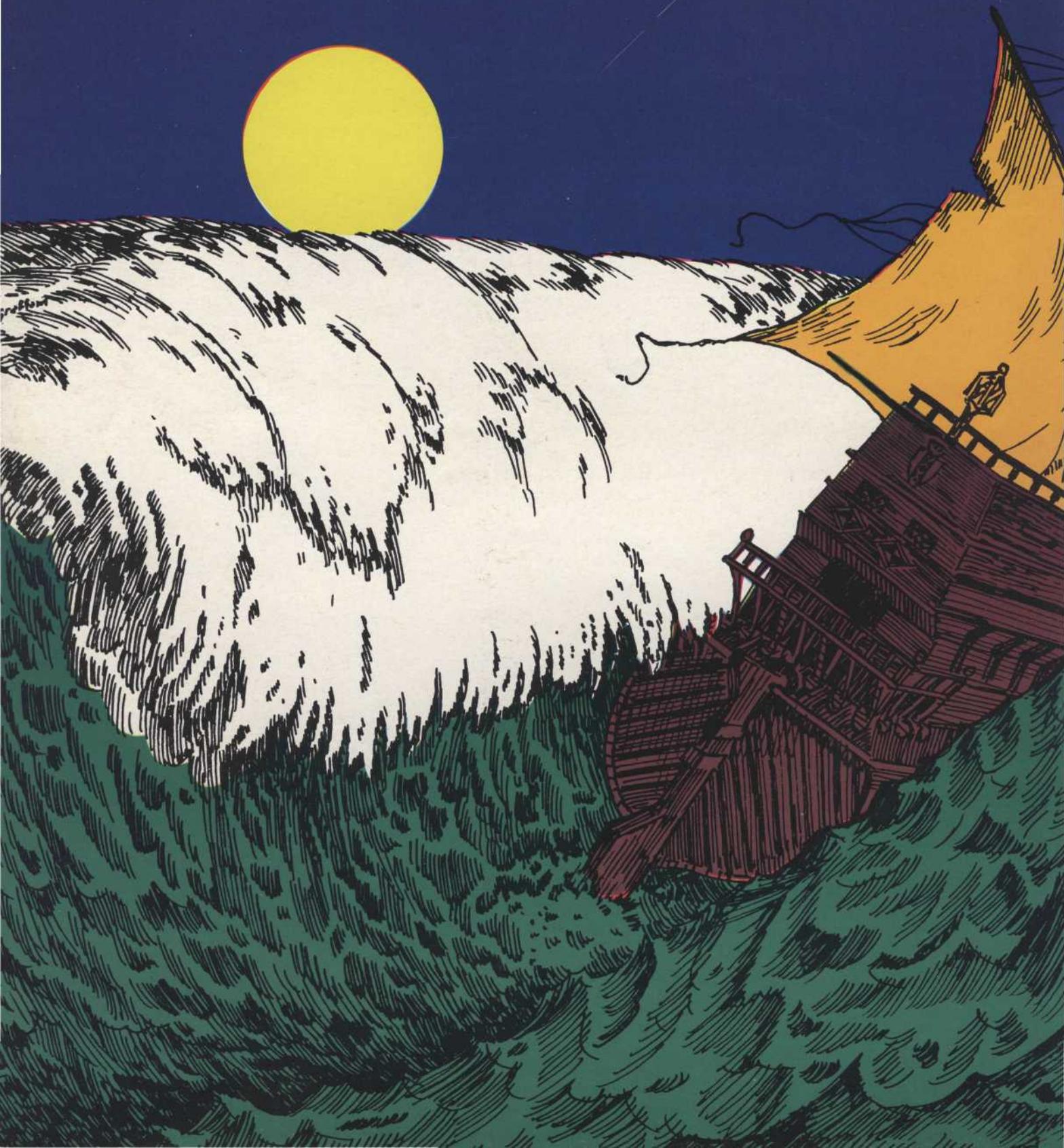
It was now time for us to leave the Sea of Cortez, so we began our journey north to San Felipe. In eight days we had touched many points of interest, explored the waters of the gulf and sought shelter in many beautiful wilderness ports.

There is no doubt the gulf has the potential of becoming a great playground, but we couldn't help but wish it will remain as it is—a place where nature is dominant and man is the occasional visitor. □

Arrangements for Gulf cruises can be made by contacting Jorge (George) Zorrilla in San Diego. His address is 830 Midway St., San Diego, California 92037.

Zorrilla said rates now are about the same, but may increase slightly because of fuel cost increases. Fishing parties will also pay a little more, because extra small boats are required to carry fishermen to the best areas once the boat gets where it's going. And there is plenty of fishing in the sea, too.

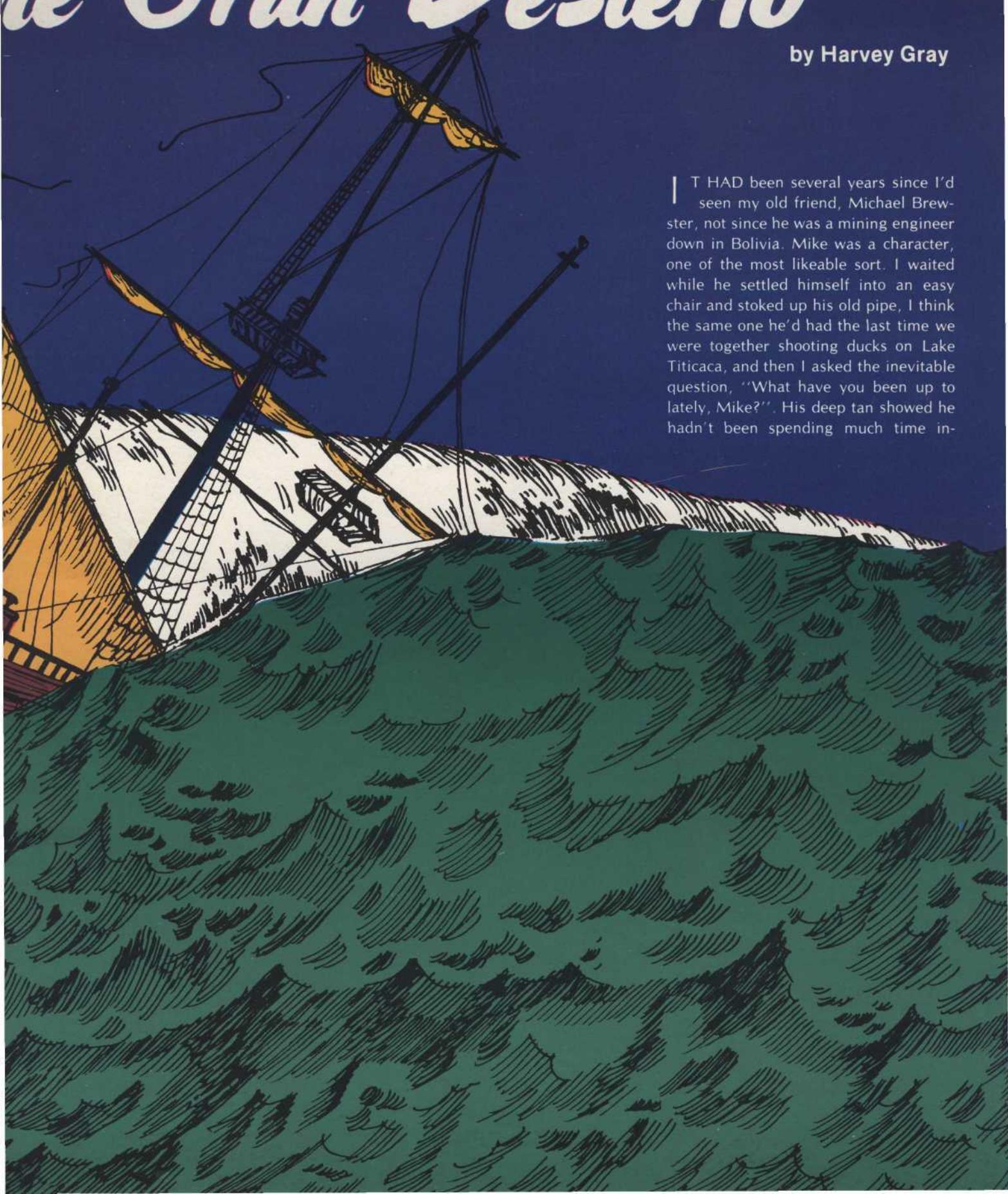
Phantom Ship of the



The Gran Desierto

by Harvey Gray

I T HAD been several years since I'd seen my old friend, Michael Brewster, not since he was a mining engineer down in Bolivia. Mike was a character, one of the most likeable sort. I waited while he settled himself into an easy chair and stoked up his old pipe, I think the same one he'd had the last time we were together shooting ducks on Lake Titicaca, and then I asked the inevitable question, "What have you been up to lately, Mike?". His deep tan showed he hadn't been spending much time in-



doors, but I wasn't quite prepared for the story he came up with.

"We, my three partners and me, have been lookin' for a sunken ship, full of Spanish treasures—we hope," was his opener.

"I've read where quite a few people have been doing that sort of thing down along the Florida coast and Keys and in the Carribean, and finding some old Spanish treasure ships, too. Is that where you've been?"

"Nope, we've been a long way from there. This ship is different, it's English."

"I thought you said a Spanish treasure ship."

"Not quite what I said," he replied. "It's a Spanish treasure, but it's an English ship."

"I see, I think. When did you take up scuba diving? Is it in the Atlantic or the Pacific?"

"I didn't, and it's neither one. In fact, it isn't even very wet where it lays a few feet below the surface." Mike was up to his old tricks. He had a tantalizing way of saying things without coming right out and saying them.

"Yes, it's a shipwreck, all right, an old sailing ship, and it's buried beneath a big sand dune about 12 miles north of the Gulf of California."

I must have looked nonplused; it took a few moments for me to visualize that kind of shipwreck. "Now, how in the devil could a ship get that far out of water? She must have been making knots to skid so far after hitting the beach."

"That weren't quite the way it happened. But I'll have to start at the beginning to convince you it's no tall tale—of which you seem convinced already. You was always a skeptic." Funny thing, though, most of Mike's tall yarns in the past had turned out to be more fact than fancy. He was a pretty factual sort of an individual.

I loaded my pipe and sat back, prepared for the long session it was sure to be. Mike puffed on his pipe for a minute without saying anything, collecting his thoughts by all appearance. Finally, he began: "It's hard to believe this weatherbeaten old ghost could have haunted the Gran Desierto of Sonora for more than 300 years, jumpin' up on rare occasions then fadin' away like a puff of dust in the wind. It's downright spooky!"

He continued, "It isn't more'n 100 miles from Yuma, but it's only been seen a few times by Indians over the centuries—accordin' to their legends—and the last time was over 100 years ago."

I thought maybe he was stretching a point there. "You mean it's within 100 miles of a city the size of Yuma all that time and no one has come across it? Trail bikes and dune buggies are getting all over the desert these days."

Mike wasn't impressed by my comment. "Not this desert, they ain't. In the first place, it's in Mexico, and in the second place, you'd have to see it in the first place. Sand dunes up to 300 feet high in places, not a livin' soul around for miles and miles, the place is lousy with rattlers and scorpions—there's a lot of them, too," he added as an afterthought—"and it's a lot of miles to the nearest water hole, when there's water in it. The Indians have steered clear of the whole area for the past century on account of there's nothin' to attract them any more. It's no place for anyone primarily interested in survival. Only reason we went there was 'cause it's the only place the ship was—then, too, maybe we'd had a mite too much sun."

"Now, that last remark isn't too hard to believe," I needled him.

He gave me a dirty look, "I'll ignore that dumb crack. The old ghost appears in the form of a three-masted barkentine. It's one that battled the seas for a time, battled the Spanish on occasion, and the elements for centuries. Its broken hulk carries the scars of all them battles, but mainly the last one when she came out second best."

I said, "Such a ghost I'd like to see."

He went on as though he hadn't heard me. "We finally assembled all the known facts, threw in a bit of logic and calculations, then pieced it out with a mite of imagination and came up with the spot where it ended up, too. We know its name, where it sailed from and when, what it did, what it carried, when, why and how it arrived at its not-so-watery grave, and soon as we find it can probably tell you who was aboard."

"This begins to sound intriguing," I said, as he drew a heavy envelope from his pocket.

"Intriguin' it is, *amigo*. But to give you the whole story, without missin' some important details, better let me read my notes."

He took a couple of pulls on his pipe and cleared his throat as though launching into a profound oration, and started reading: "On July 31st of the year 1586, the small privateer fleet of Thomas Cavendish sailed from the port of Plymouth, England. The two barkentines were the "Desire" of 120 tons, the "Content" of 60 tons, and a smaller bark, the "Hugh Gallant," all heavily armed and carrying a total complement of 123 men.

"Depending on whether it's the Spanish or the English archives, Cavendish was either a pirate or a privateer. His mission was one of legitimate warfare, sailing under a letter of marque from Queen Elizabeth to harass and destroy any Spanish ships in American waters and sack their port towns.

"His voyage down the west coast of Africa, across the south Atlantic, through the Straits of Magellan and on up the west coast was not an easy one. Scurvy had depleted his crews to the point where, off the coast of Ecuador, he scuttled the Hugh Gallant in order to fill out the crews to 60 on the Desire, and 40 on the Content. They had raided the coastal towns of Chile and Peru as they worked their way north, obtaining little of value but causing much destruction.

"By July 11th, 1587, they were off the coast of Central America making slow progress. On the 19th, they captured a Spanish ship of 120 tons off the port of Acajutla, on the coast of El Salvador. The ship was in ballast, carrying nothing of value. But one of the Manila pilots was aboard, a Frenchman who went under the Spanish name of Miguel Sanchez. He was taken prisoner and the ship burned. The English crew tortured the Frenchman until he revealed that two Manila galleons were due to arrive in Acapulco from the Orient within a month or so. Another Spanish ship was captured shortly after leaving Acajutla and given the same treatment as the first. This had proven a good hunting ground for the privateers, but word of the impending arrival of the Manila galleons, prizes well worth taking, sent them on to the northward.

"They paused along the way long enough to capture and destroy the port of Guatulco on the southern coast of Mexico, and gathered enough silver and other valuables to make the raid worthwhile. They also took as prisoner the *alcalde mayor*, one Juan de Rengifo.

"Leaving Guatulco on August 12th, they passed up Acapulco even though it was the destination of the galleons, and continued on to the port of Navidad, headquarters for the pearling ships that plied the Gulf of California. They gave it the same treatment Guatulco had received, except this time all the men were taken prisoners and then ransomed back to the women for food and supplies. They stopped at one of the islands north of Mazatlan long enough to careen and trim the ships before continuing on across the Gulf to San Lucas Bay at the southern tip of Baja California.

"There they awaited the arrival of the galleons, one ship constantly patrolling off the coast, and the other keeping a lookout posted on the high ground maintaining a constant vigil.

"The galleon Santa Ana was over five months out of Manila and nearing the American shores after plodding her cumbersome way across the Pacific. It was on November 14th when her lookout saw sails on the horizon. Captain Tomas de Alzola believed them to be Spanish pearlers bound for Mazatlan. On the following morning, he was startled to see two ships closing in on the Santa Ana, and recognized them as enemies."

Mike look up from his notes and said, "Now, here's a fine study in futility. Alzola began preparing for battle. With his cannon useless below the waterline behind caulked ports, if indeed there were cannon aboard, the Captain issued small arms, lances, cutlass', arquebusses and even stones to the crew and passengers, more than 300 in all. Barricades were hastily improvised from the deck cargo. It was a ship poorly prepared to battle an enemy as well armed as the privateers.

"The Desire opened fire with a barrage from its heavy cannon and small arms. It came along the starboard side of the Santa Ana and a boarding party of 40 men swarmed over the railing amidship. In the melee that followed, two Englishmen were killed and several wounded, casualties among those of the Santa Ana heavy before the boarding party was forced to retreat.

"The initial attack was followed by two more, inflicting heavy damage on the galleon, even though a second boarding party was repulsed. Cavendish then changed his tactics. Realizing he was outmanned by the Santa Ana, he stood



A lonely place of refuge in the barren Gran Desierto wastelands.

off out of small arms range and bombarded the galleon with his heavy cannon, inflicting great damage. The masts and rigging were down on the decks and there were a number of holes on her waterline. Many more Spanish casualties were inflicted. Alzola, having no powder left and a near derelict on his hands, had no choice but to surrender, his position was untenable."

"I wonder why Cavendish didn't use his heavy cannon more in the first place?" I commented.

Mike didn't even look up as he said, "I don't know. Ask him if you ever run across him," and went on reading.

"It took the Desire, with the aid of the Content, until the following afternoon to tow their prize into San Lucas Bay. There, they put the 190 survivors ashore with limited supplies and sail cloth for shelters, then went about taking inventory of the cargo. It consisted of the usual Chinese goods, ivory carvings, silks, perfumes, spices, wines, brandies, chinaware and provisions. Much to the delight of young Cavendish and his crew, they found a small fortune in the strong box; 120,000 pesos in gold and a

quantity of fine black pearls."

Mike paused for a moment to moisten his vocal cords and said, "Now, we're gettin' down to the interestin' part, where the old ghost of the desert begins shapin' up.

"There was discontent among the crews, especially that of the Content, over the division of spoils and an incipient mutiny developed. Cavendish believed he had the matter settled when he divided the booty into three equal parts, one for himself, one part for the Queen, and the third to be divided equally among the crews.

"Having thus smoothed over the unrest among the men—he thought—they proceeded to unmast and set fire to the Santa Ana, including some 500 tons of her cargo; taking with them 200 tons of the most valuable items aboard the Desire and Content, all they could carry.

"On November 29th, 1587, the English privateers sailed from San Lucas Bay after firing a final salvo into the Santa Ana. The Content followed the wake of the Desire out into the Gulf." Mike barely looked up as he said, "Now get this! She was seen to lag behind and af-

Father Kino's map [1698-1701] showing that California was not an island, as earlier navigators had envisioned.

ter a time swing off to the north, as the Desire, under full sail, turned to the south to pick up the galleon route to the Orient and on around South Africa to England. They arrived in Plymouth on September 20th, 1588, with their treasures intact. Cavendish was subsequently knighted by Queen Elizabeth.

"No such happy ending awaited the Content. She was never heard from, disappearing from the face of the earth as though some monster of the sea had seized her—as subsequent events seem to have proven."

Mike folded up his notes. "All this early history of the Content we dug up from such sources as Gerhard and Martinez, both good reliable historians. Then we found some old archives here and there that confirmed what they'd written. Anyhow, it convinced us. Later, we picked up an old Papago Indian legend of a ship one of their ancestors had found partly protrudin' from the sand there in the desert. He'd crawled through a hole in the hull and brought out some artifacts.

"So far, that didn't prove the ship was the Content, but the things he took from the wreck just happened to be items from the Santa Ana loot. In the meantime, while we was rootin' around down there, we found some Indian artifacts in



a small cave not too far from where we think the Content lies. Among them were some items, such as a piece of sail cloth, a metal wash basin of antique construction, a part of a hoop from a wine or water cask, and some other stuff that had most probably come off a ship. No tellin' how old they were, but they'd been in that cave for a long time."

"Pretty good circumstantial evidence," I said, "but is it proof that ship is the Content?"

"Wait 'til I tell you rest!" Mike's patience was always short when one of his yarns was questioned. "Now was when the real head-scratchin' began. Just how did that ship get from San Lucas Bay to a place 12 miles north of the Gulf?"

"We figured that mutiny did take place on the Content just after she got under way and cleared the Bay. Why else would she turn north up the Gulf instead of followin' the Desire like she'd been doin' for over a year? Chances are the Captain and Mate went over the side with slit throats or a belly full of lead. The mutineers knew Cavendish would

have them swingin' from a yardarm if he ever laid hands of them, just like he'd done to that Padre he'd taken from the Santa Ana. As long as the Desire was goin' south, they had an overwhelmin' desire to go north.

"Well, we figure one of the first things the top dogs did after takin' over the ship was to start rummagin' the Captain's cabin. There they found his chart laid out on the table, just where he'd left it when the ruckus started. If you've ever seen any of the maps from them days, you'll know cartography weren't what you'd call an exact science—but they sure had an imagination for fillin' in the blank spaces. This chart of the Captain's showed Baja as a big island, with a broad channel out to the Pacific at the north end. That's what I call a downright vivid imagination."

While he stopped to fire up his pipe again, I got an atlas so I could follow his story better. He continued, "How they ever got from one end of the Gulf to the other I'll never know. Only pure luck got them past all the islands, bars and

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reefs—couldn't have been because they was livin' right! With all that free-flowin' brandy from the Santa Ana aboard, there must have been some dandy grudges comin' out in the open and plenty of first class brawls resultin'. I imagine some of them got scratched and scraped a bit maybe. I'd sure like to have seen it all from some quiet corner."

"Mike, your imagination is doing right well, almost sounds like logic. What happened after that?" I shifted to a more comfortable position; this was getting good.

"Well, they finally got up to where they could see the north end of the Gulf and started lookin' around for that wide channel out to the Pacific. Far as they could see ahead was a big flood plain with dunes beyond, back of them was mountains and more mountains with a high peak to the northeast. But between the surf and the mountains to the northeast, they spotted a break in the shoreline. They was probably sayin', 'Egad and gadzooks, we got 'er made!' or however they talked in them days. They headed for the break in the shore, but when they got close enough for a good look there was some first class cussin' went on, I'll bet. It was a muddy old river—a big one—but with all the sandbars that was showin' up, they couldn't have got the Content upstream with a shoe horn.

"There was a mean lookin' lava reef runnin' out from the shore ahead, too. They figured if they could see one there must be plenty more around they couldn't see. On account of they couldn't think of nothin' better to do, they dropped the bow anchor, figurin' the best thing to do was a little drinkin' and thinkin'. After a few dollops, they decided to stay put until high tide in the mornin', whenever that would be, then head back south. Cavendish was now about 10 days ahead of 'em, so they wouldn't see him again.

"With their leavin' San Lucas Bay on November 29th, it would have been about the night of December 4th they was ridin' there at anchor. We figured back in astronomical years and found out there was a full moon on that night of 1587. Now you know the full moon and maximum high tides goes hand in hand. As them tides come rollin' up the Gulf, they was squeezed in between the taperin' shorelines. The Gulf stretches out

about 45 miles wider at the north than it did in them days. So as the shores got closer and closer, the only place that tidewater could go was up and it got deeper and deeper, or higher and higher—dependin' on whether you're a fish or a duck. Tidal bores better'n 20 feet high, same as a tidal wave, are a matter of record in them days.

"Now, as we figure it, the Content was layin' there, fat, dumb and happy, like an old houn' dog stretched out in front of a campfire. She was probably ridin' on her bow anchor and swingin' into a westerly wind when the tidal bore slapped her broadside. She rolled over on her beam ends, maybe all the way over, and righted herself as she floated back to the surface; draggin her bow anchor as the bore carried her along. Then, like an old seagull droppin' a clam on a rock, the bore plunked the Content down on the lava reef. She's still sittin' right there today, with a big hole in her bottom and a big sand dune on her top."

I said, "Mike, you should have been a detective, the way you handle the clues."

"Maybe so, but you're about 40 years too late with your suggestion."

He sat there for a few moments with a pensive look on his face, as though dwelling in the past. "You know something," he said, "it seems to me the whole world turned its back on them cutthroats. The Gulf slowly crept away to the south, and the river moved its delta miles to the west as the tidal sands gradually filled in the shoreline and choked off the river channels. The old ghost stays put there on its rocky bier, but its spirit is still restless. Every once in a while she comes up for all the world to see—and nobody's lookin'."

By this time both of us were having visions of ghost ships sailing across the billowing sands. "We're goin' back this fall when the weather cools off a bit, and this time I'll bet we find her if we get half a break from the wind uncoverin' a bit of her poop deck cabin."

"You've convinced me, Mike. How about signing on for your next expedition?"

He wasn't paying any attention. My wife had just announced dinner, and the old chow hound remembered her good cooking. He had something on his mind more important than ghost ships and Spanish treasures. □

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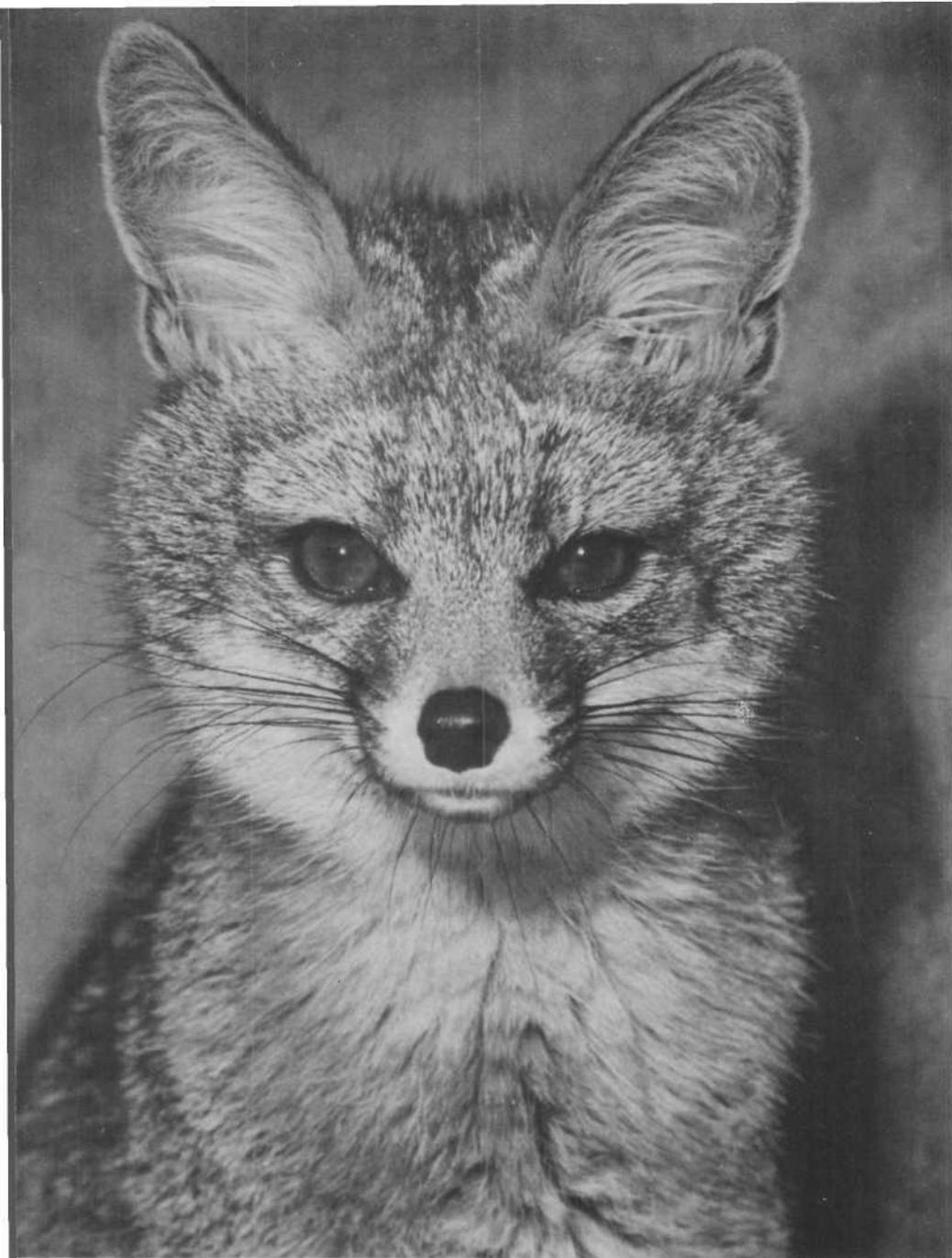


Photo by G. E. Kirkpatrick

IN THE timbered cliff and canyon lands of the desert, there resides a member of the fox tribe who, while of lesser renown than his famous red cousin, is nevertheless quite distinguished in his own right. This is the grey fox, a five to ten pound little number done in tasteful pepper and salt or ashy tones, with a handsome bushy tail, tipped in black.

Scientists who dearly love to manufacture long-winded labels for animals picked *Urocyon* (dog tail) *cinereoargenteus* (ashy silvered) for this one. The color reference is obvious; dog tail, because in the case of certain other wild members of the canine family, foxy has a patch of stiff hairs along the top line of his tail with no soft fur underneath. This is the site of a gland located in the skin below that is the source of his own individual scent. Scent glands are used in canine communication.

The extent of their use, and the subtlety of their meaning, are matters that are, alas, lost on mankind who, because of his inferior nasal equipment, can never appreciate such niceties. Naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton made a try at it, and his anatomical comparisons made some years ago showed that these glands vary in size and shape from species to species, and sizewise among individuals themselves. A grey fox's gland measuring four and one-half inches in length is a good four times longer than his red cousin's, and even three times longer than that of a coyote or wolf. Why

Photo by George M. Bradt



DESERT Quicksilver

by K. L. Boynton

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this pint-sized fox needs a bigger scent gland than anybody else's is still his own business today, pondering zoologists being unable as of yet to come up with a satisfactory answer. For that matter, there are other things not exactly crystal clear about the affairs of this little guy.

The grey fox gets along fine in the desert with a life style of his own. No child of the creosote-dotted flats he. For him, the foothill regions of desert mountain ranges, laced with rocky gulches and deep canyons, is an ideal residential section. Plenty of first-class home sites are available here in secret caves, rocky piles and narrow crevices. Here, too, grow pinyons and junipers, fine for shady loafing during the day. Best of all are the tangles of brush that abound—life savers in time of pursuit.

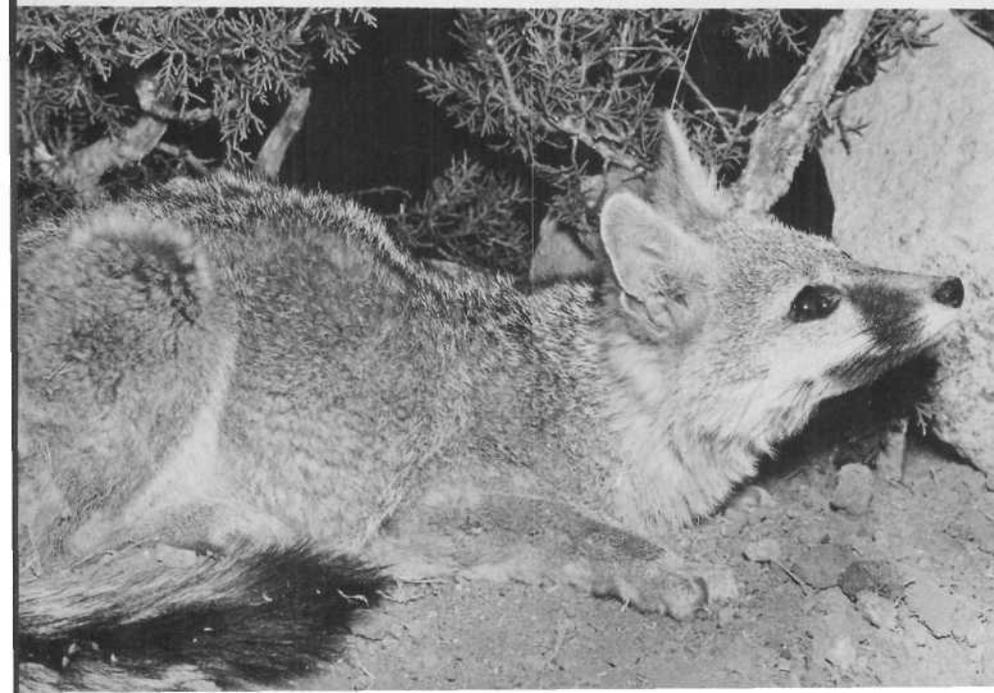
Indeed, when it comes to streaking through impenetrable underbrush with successful gay abandon, foxy is second only to Brer Rabbit, a fellow long famous for his briar patch getaways. Pursued by a far fleeter coyote, foxy dives into the brush only one jump ahead, and is well away and gone by the time the coyote, tangled in the brush edge before he can stop, gets himself sorted out again.

Anatomist Milton Hildebrand, viewing such a spectacle and pondering the question of why the grey fox is so good at it, and a red fox on the other hand no thick-brush speedster, took a look at their two skeletons. True enough, the red fox is a better runner, having longer



legs, but the grey fox is far better equipped for traveling over brushy terrain. His shorter legs are a real advantage for ducking under and through low-growing shrubs and the fact that his front legs are short relative to his hind gives greater agility for twisting, turning maneuvers at high speed in a cramped space.

As for the coyote-grey fox competition, let it also be said that foxy's fancy nose whiskers, besides being so highly decorative, are part of his life-saving device. Now nose whiskers on an animal's face are very stiff hairs, each set in a nerve pocket, and each acts as a first class touch receptor. A fox rushing through underbrush is being constantly informed by his extra long nose whisk-



Continued on Page 40



Ehrenberg, on the Colorado River, was the "city" of the region, with several hundred inhabitants, when the Rohwer brothers reached it in 1870, after their gold discovery. Picture taken shortly before the last ruins were bulldozed.

ROHWER'S

MY FRIEND, Bill Keiser, pioneer of Quartzsite and Yuma County, Arizona, life-long prospector and miner, always held to the theory that Germans could not get or keep their bearings in desert or wild country. That, he said, was probably the reason that George Rohwer couldn't relocate the golden ledge he had seen once somewhere between the Castle Dome Mountains and old Ehrenberg, on the Colorado River. A more likely reason might be that Rohwer made his first attempt to rediscover the ledge more than 35 years after his one short glimpse of it.

But Bill was strong on the German theory. He told me a story to prove it. In the olden days, Bill's friend, Arizona pioneer Charles B. Genung, was Indian Agent at what is now Parker, Arizona, teaching the Mohaves how to farm and irrigate according to the Great White Father's specifications. One day Major Dent, commanding at nearby Camp

Colorado, requested Genung to bring an Indian tracker and help in the search for a Frenchman lost on the desert.

"Genung told me the Mohave had no trouble picking up the man's trail where he left the road," Bill said. "But while everyone in the search party said the lost man was a Frenchman, the Indian insisted he was a German. When the Indian found him, still alive, he did prove to be a German. Later, Genung asked the tracker how he knew the lost man's nationality.

"'Oh, that easy,' the Mohave said. 'Frenchman lose trail, but Dutchman, he lose wagon road.'"

Anyway, back in 1870, George Rohwer and his brother were burro prospecting, and were camped at the Stone Cabin, on La Posa Plain near the northern end of the Castle Dome Mountains. From before recorded history in that part of Arizona until recent times, the Stone Cabin was a well known landmark and stopping

place on the route between Yuma and Quartzsite (or Tyson Wells, as it was earlier known)—about 60 miles north of Yuma, 20 plus south of Quartzsite.

There is no evidence of mining near the cabin, but there was a small natural tank in the neighboring hill, and water is precious in that country. The actual history of the Stone Cabin remains unknown, but it must go back at least to the La Paz rush in 1862, since it was a familiar spot when the Rohwer brothers camped there in 1870. Bill Keiser insisted it was far more ancient, going back to a lost era of silver mining by the French, along the Colorado River. On our end of the time chain, its identity as a landmark was annihilated with the building of a service station in the vicinity about 1950.

On this long ago morning, George and his brother broke camp early at the Stone Cabin, set out northerly, and reached Ehrenberg that night. Ehrenberg was the center of the region then, its popula-

tion in 1871 given as 500.

The distance they traveled that day, George later told Bill, was about 35 miles. Naturally, they prospected as they went. And somewhere along the way—somewhere—they found an antimony prospect and a gold ledge that looked so good they intended to return it as soon as they re-outfitted at Ehrenberg.

But when they reached town, they found it stirred with excitement about new strikes in the Silver District, down the Colorado River on the Arizona side, about half way to Yuma. A little rush was already under way, and the brothers packed their burros and joined it.

Bill Keiser also had a theory—no, it was more than that, a conviction—about “burro punchers.” He had a story to prove his point there, too.

“In 1902,” he said, “I started with Felix Mayhew from the King of Arizona mine, at Kofa, for a ranch I was taking up on the Colorado at the mouth of Trigo Wash. Just before we got to Weaver Pass, we saw a fellow coming with a burro. And it was old W. W. McCoy. McCoy Mountain, across the river in California, was named for him.

“I said, ‘Where you camped?’
“He said, ‘Oh, down at Weaver Tank. And I’m looking for my darned burros. Big and Little Julia. You know, you think you’re fooling the burros, but you’re not. I been feeding those burros grain and water every morning. They’d hang around all night. Be right there in the morning. I been down there three or four weeks, camped, and they were there every day. I began to load my boxes last night. Thought I’d save time. And one of them stood there with her ears laid up in front of her, looking at me. The other had one ear up and one down, watching me. They knew I was getting ready to leave. By golly, this morning they didn’t show up. A burro is smart.’

“We left him there and went on,” Bill continued. “Then, in 1915 or 1916, I got myself a little old Model T Ford. And I decided one day that I’d go up to the mouth of Trigo Pass and go north to look at a little mineral prospect that I knew of. Within a quarter of a mile of the spot that I met old McCoy in 1902, there he was again, on a burro. I asked him if he remembered me. He said yes.

“I said, ‘you were camped down at

Weaver Tank, then and you were hunting burros.’

“He said, ‘Yes, sir. And I’m camped there now, and I’m hunting those same dangd burros.’

“They always used to say that most burro punchers were hunting burros about 300 days of the year, and were living at a water hole about 30. That only gave them about 30 days to prospect. Then they didn’t prospect more than a mile away from the tanks. So the burro punchers usually never found anything.

“Now and then, you’d find some hard working fellow that would go out and find something. But most of those old fellows, they were going to stay close to whiskey or water—preferably whiskey.”

The things Bill said about the burro prospectors, I once heard from burro prospectors about Model T and other auto prospectors. Only it was asserted they would never look more than a mile from a road, and always wanted to get home for supper.

But either the Rohwer brothers were among the hard workers Bill referred to, or they were the exception that proved his rule about burro prospectors. Be-

LOST GOLD

by Harold Weight

Ruins of the Stone Cabin, ancient landmark along the old Yuma-Quartzsite road from which the Rohwer brothers left in 1870 for their trip to Ehrenberg during which they found the golden ledge. Picture taken in 1948.

Photos by Harold Weight





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cause they went right down to the Silver District, prospected, and discovered the Red Cloud mine—silver and lead, with rich silver croppings at the surface.

"George and his brother mined and shipped \$50,000 of ore by river steamer," Bill said, "And then sold the Red Cloud for \$70,000. George went East, got married, had two boys and a nice farm in Missouri."

The Red Cloud was one of the earliest locations in the Silver District, but little besides oral history of its operation seems to be available for those times. Patrick Hamilton, in his *Resources of Arizona*, 3rd edition, 1884, says the discoverers, unnamed, took "over \$30,000 in black metallic silver" from the croppings. It was then sold to a New York company, which put up a small smelter at the mouth of Red Cloud wash, and unsuccessfully sought to reduce the ores there. "The mine was wretchedly handled," said Hamilton, "and is now lying idle, a monument to ignorant and incompetent management."

Hamilton thought it too fine a property to remain idle, and the Red Cloud later did become one of the most successful mines of the district. (In later, rockhound times, it also supplied collectors with beautiful vanadinite and wulfenite crystals.) But if the Rohwer brothers bagged \$120,000 from the mine in a few years, it seems certain they were its most fortunate owners.

Such luck did not continue, for George at least. "He drank and gambled too much," Bill said. "And at last he gave his wife the farm and all the cash he had, except for a few hundred dollars, and he came back here.

"From 1907 to 1909, George made his home with me, while I was camped at the Mariquita mine, about five miles from Quartzsite."

Why had George returned to this part of Arizona? To search for a lost ledge—although when he came back he did not know it was lost. He had remembered, through the years, the rich promise of the gold he and his brother had discovered just before they went to the Silver District. Perhaps, as time passed, it had become richer in his mind. He was certain he could go right to the ledge. He depended upon its remembered richness to solve all his problems.

It would appear that this ledge must already have been worked upon, or at

Main Indian trail through Weaver Pass in the Dome Rock Mountains. This is quite possibly the route the Rohwer brothers took when they found the gold.

least opened. Hence George's description of the antimony as a "prospect" and the gold as a "property." In fact, George told Bill that he believed the gold they had found was the Lost Cunningham mine.

I toss this Lost Cunningham bit into the story in the hope that someone will know more about it than I do—which is only the name. It must have been familiar in that region, though, since Bill mentioned it so casually in one of his letters, in connection with Rohwer's gold, that he must have thought I knew about it. And I intended to ask him about it some time, but he died in May, 1963, with the Lost Cunningham still a mystery. Any details of its supposed location should narrow the area in which Rohwer's gold might exist.

I'm certain that the Cunningham involved was Charles O. Cunningham, who came to Arizona in the Colorado River-La Paz gold excitement from "the Monte" near Los Angeles, where he had been the community's first justice of the peace, and where he left a young widow and two children when he was killed by Indians near Prescott in May, 1865. Cunningham was in near the beginning of the La Paz rush, having been reported along the Bradshaw road, southwest of Blythe, in July 1862 with 10,000 pounds of freight. He was active in prospecting and locating claims in Arizona, but his main interest seemed to lie in copper deposits northeast of Quartzsite in the Harcuvar Mountains—a Cunningham Pass still recalls him there. These copper claims, in which he was associated with Herman Ehrenberg, were abandoned after his death.

But the *Los Angeles News* noted as early as April, 1863 that Cunningham was interested in claims in the La Paz district, and one of these may have become the Lost Cunningham.

There is an enormous area of rough and still wild desert between the Stone Cabin and the site of Ehrenberg. To search this blindly would waste many lifetimes. However, there is one limiting clue to Rohwer's lost gold—the anti-



mony prospect.

George told Bill: "I have to find the antimony to find the gold." The catch is, antimony is pretty rare stuff, and there is no native antimony mine—or prospect—of record in Arizona. But stibnite and cervantite, ores of antimony, have been reported. Where? In the Dome Rock Mountains, for one place. The Dome Rocks lie between Quartzsite and Ehrenberg, across or touching almost every route the Rohwer brothers might have taken between the Stone Cabin and Ehrenberg.

If they followed Trigo Pass, they would have been between the North and South Trigo Peaks and the Dome Rocks. If they took Weaver Pass, they would have gone through the Dome Rocks. If they took the lesser known Copper Bottom Pass, they would also have gone through the Dome Rocks. And, for extra encouragement, the only named peak between Weaver Pass and Copper Bottom Pass is Cunningham Mountain. Rich gold placers were found farther north in the Dome Rocks, in the La Paz rush, but the mountains have no great record of lode gold production.

The only locality given for stibnite and cervantite in the Dome Rocks is "eight miles southwest of Quartzsite," which would be north of Copper Bottom Pass. But there is pretty good evidence that the antimony George was looking for was farther south.

I was certain that Bill Keiser once—long before Rohwer's gold was mentioned—had talked to me about an antimony property he knew. So I started searching

letters and recording sessions, and I found it in a tape made in February, 1953. And this is where Bill's second meeting with burro-hunting W. W. McCoy really enters this lost mine picture.

When he met McCoy on that 1915 or 1916 trip, Bill was on his way "up to the mouth of Trigo Pass to go north to look at a little antimony property that I knew of." North from the mouth of Trigo Pass would have meant up along the Dome Rocks toward Weaver Pass, and presumably to a spot closer to Trigo than to Weaver Pass.

Was Bill Keiser—knowing of the antimony prospect or following Rohwer's directions—actually looking for the lost ledge at that time? Possibly. But Bill seldom chased lost mines, so it would indicate a surprising amount of belief in the ledge's existence.

If Bill did search for the gold, he didn't find it.

Neither did George Rohwer.

"Rohwer never did find his lost mine," Bill said. "But I knew something was wrong, just from his description of the route—about 35 miles long—they took to Ehrenberg. To make the trip in about one day, he had to take a more direct route than the one he described.

"And from the conversations and experiences I had with George at my camp at the Mariquita, I knew that wherever he searched, he would get lost just a few miles away from camp. I knew it was impossible—for George Rohwer—to locate something he had found all those years before." □

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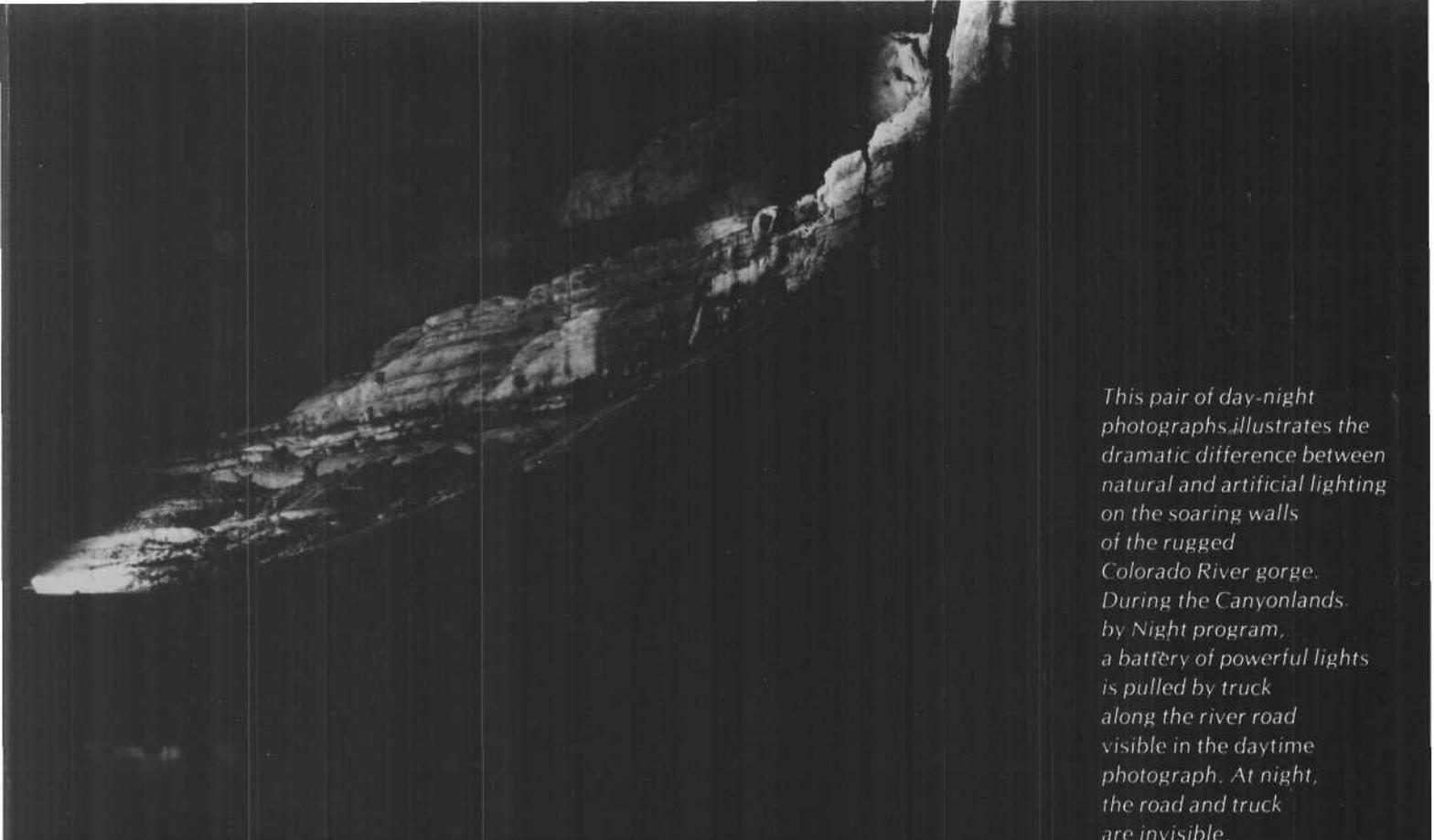
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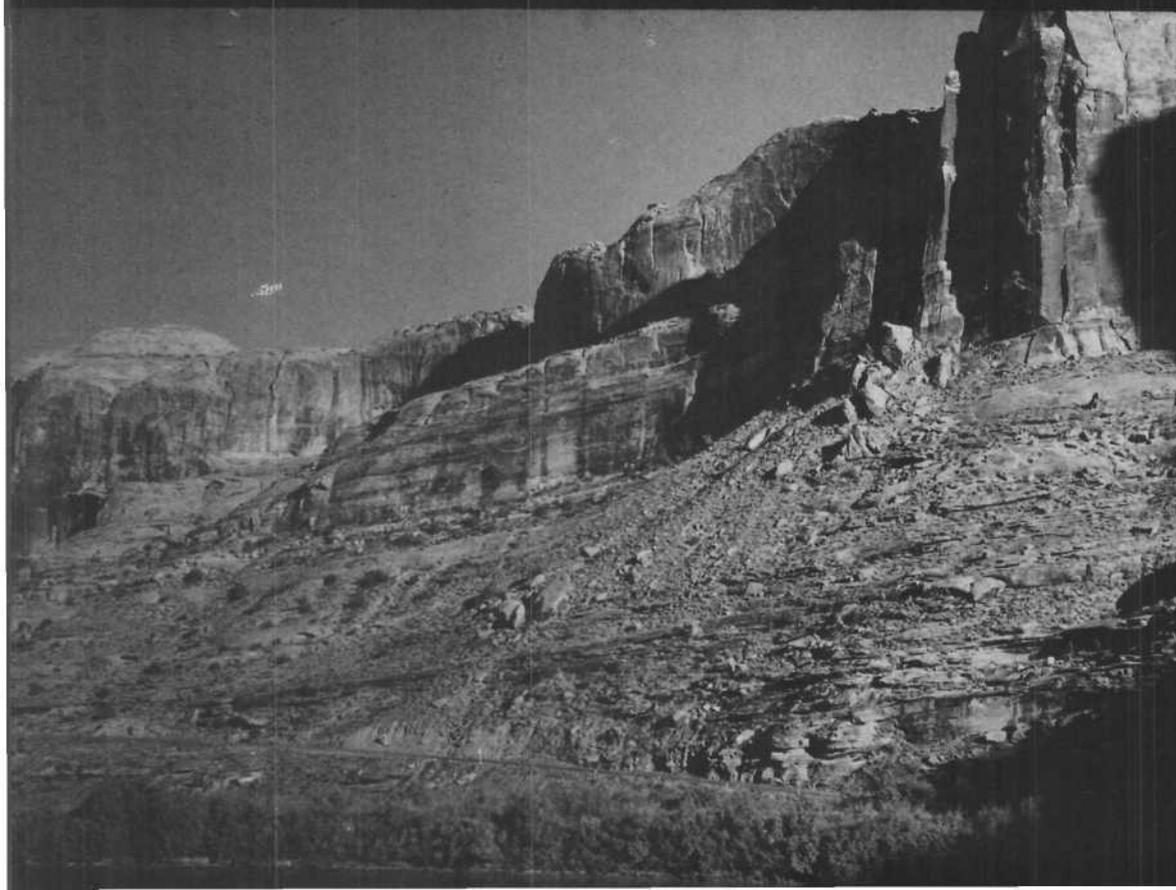
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This pair of day-night photographs illustrates the dramatic difference between natural and artificial lighting on the soaring walls of the rugged Colorado River gorge. During the Canyonlands by Night program, a battery of powerful lights is pulled by truck along the river road visible in the daytime photograph. At night, the road and truck are invisible.

CANYONLANDS



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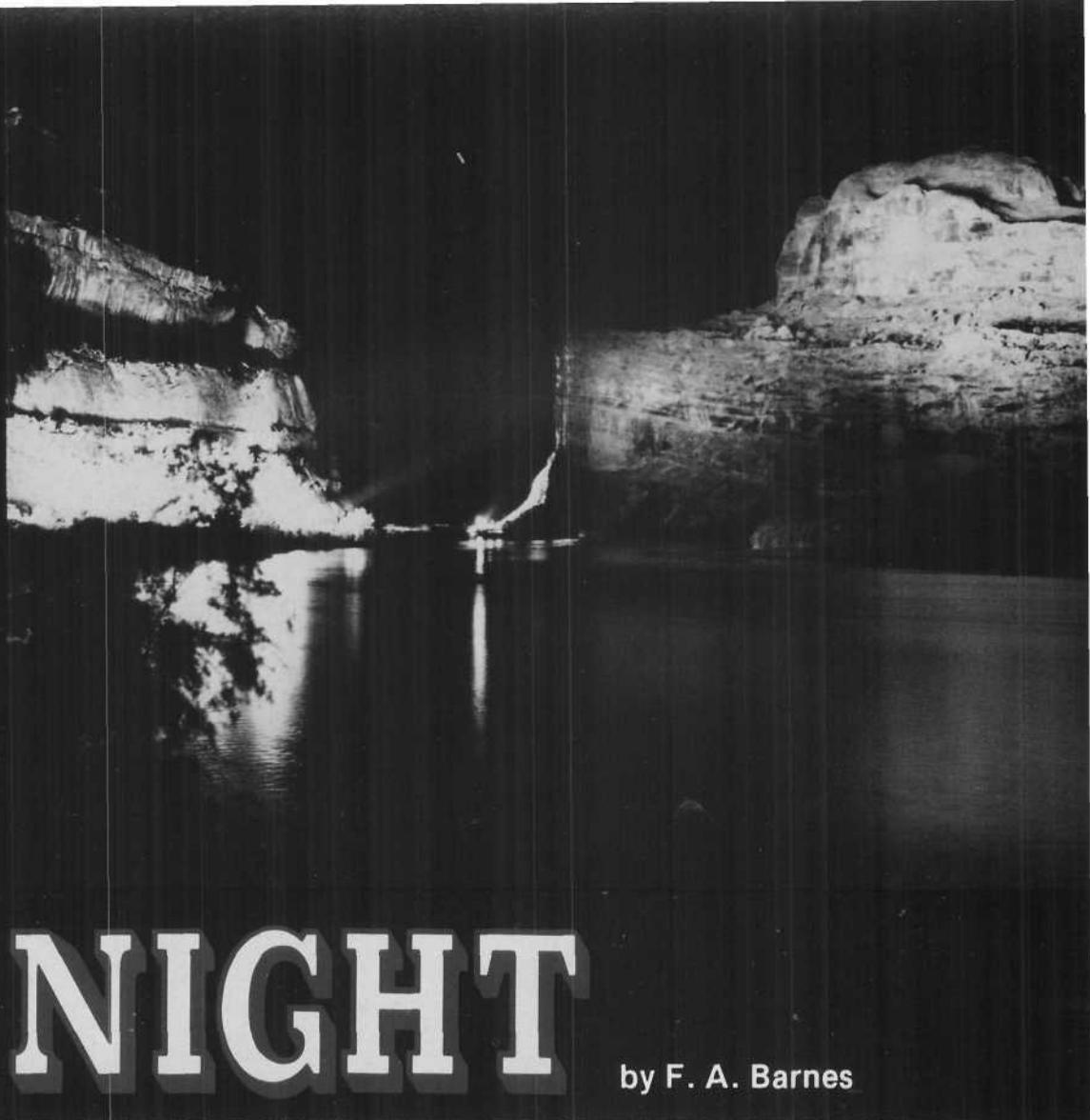
Traditionally, this unique form of entertainment is presented to a stationary audience, in a theater or outdoor amphitheater, with a wide variety of programs dramatized by unusual lighting and sound effects.

The light-and-sound program in Utah's canyon-

These two photographs were taken from the same spot on the riverbank, one by normal daylight, the other during the closing sequences of the Canyonlands By Night program. Together, they illustrate the dramatically different effects produced by controlled artificial lighting.

In the distance is The Portal, where the Colorado River enters the open valley in which Moab lies.

Time exposure of the night photograph permitted the light truck to "paint" the cliffs with its moving lights. The short streak above The Portal was probably made by the planet Venus during the time exposure.



BY NIGHT

by F. A. Barnes

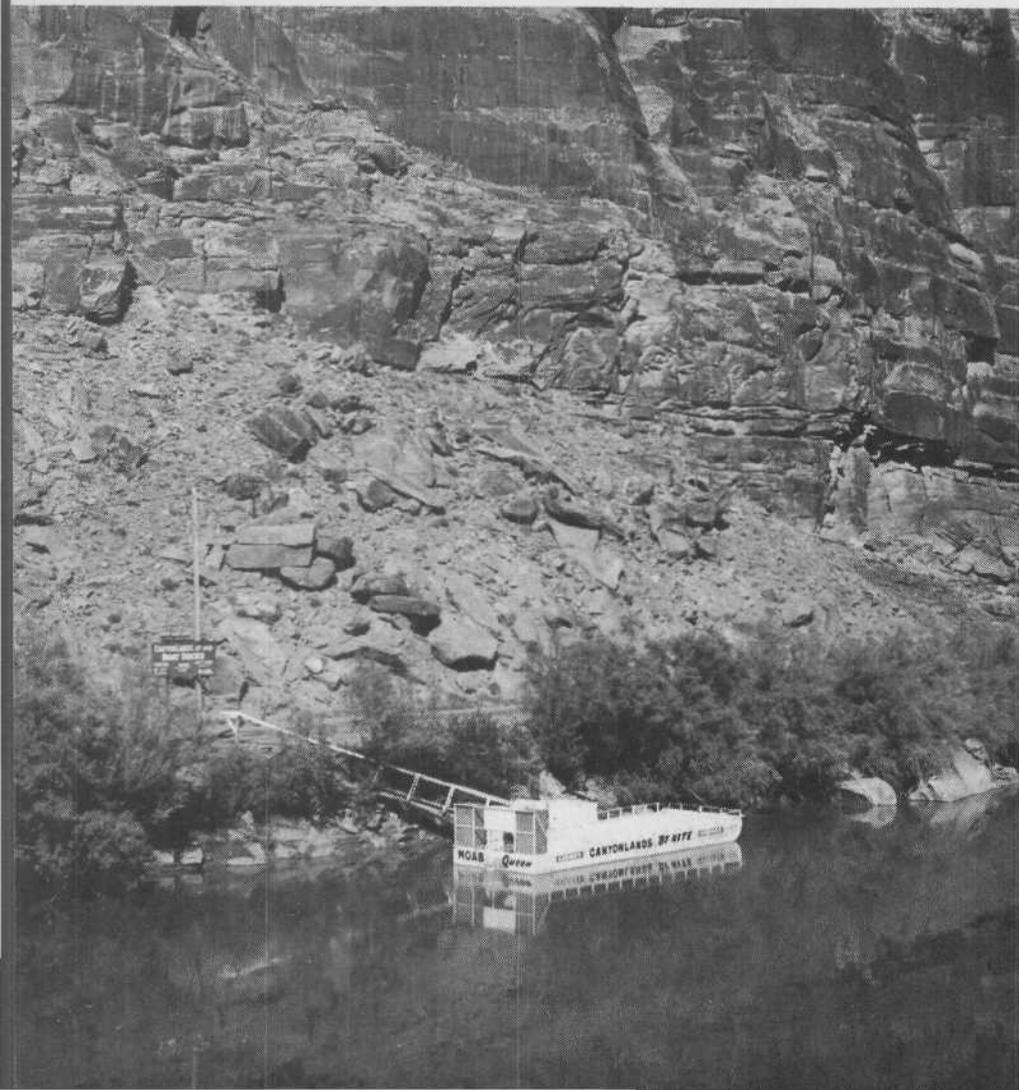
lands, called "Canyonlands By Night," is different in almost every respect, and these differences all add up to a program that is unique and outstanding.

First, the audience is moved past the "stage," aboard a large, flat-bottomed boat propelled by a whisper-quiet jet engine, along a calm stretch of the Colorado River. As the boat eases down the night-darkened gorge, a recorded program tells the fascinating tale of the geologic and human history of the area, and powerful light beams





Left: The developer of the Canyonlands By Night light-and-sound show, Skinny Winn, with his light truck. The three large round lights are 5000-watt floodlamps, and the four rectangular lights are 1500-watt quartz-iodine lamps. Below: At the Colorado River dock, located where U.S. 163 crosses the river, stationary floods light up the cliffs while passengers load into the boat for the trip upriver. The lighted red cliffs can be seen for miles around, and present a beautiful sight to travelers on the highway.



on the gorge, giving dramatic emphasis to the narration.

The "Canyonlands By Night" program begins at dusk, each night during the travel season, from early spring to late fall, at a dock by the river bridge just north of Moab, Utah. Here, spectators board the "Moab Queen" and take seats much like those in an outdoor theater.

Once loaded, the boat eases out from shore and heads slowly upriver on the calm, reflective water of the Colorado. Its passengers watch the canyonlands twilight descend, and gaze in awe at the towering canyon walls on both sides of the river, as the show's host talks informally and answers questions about the area and what is being seen.

As dusk falls, the high cliffs that crowd the river become black silhouettes, only faintly visible against the starry sky. The ghostly forms of shoreline trees and brush drift quietly by, adding to the eeriness of the scene.

After wending its way upriver for several miles, following the narrow navigable channel that twists and turns through shallows and between hidden sandbars, the boat finally nudges onto one such sandbar and all grows quiet. The audience sits silent, absorbing the intense stillness of the black desert night, sensing the vast span of time represented by the ancient river gorge they know surrounds them on all sides.

Suddenly, there is light! A huge rock promontory that reaches high above the river is suddenly ablaze with brilliant light!

With a professionally recorded tape, played over a high fidelity sound system on the boat, working in perfect coordination with a set of powerful, moving lights on shore, the program begins. As it unfolds, the boat drifts slowly, silently with the river current, guided by its idling engine. The battery of lights paces the boat, towed along a shoreline road that parallels the river at the base of the high cliffs, illuminating the changing scenery and dramatizing the recorded narrative.

As the light-and-sound presentation continues, it dramatizes the early formation of the earth, the development and progress of life through the ages, the early and recent history of the human race in nearby southeastern Utah, and at one point simulates a thunder storm with startling reality. The program is beautifully prepared and presented, highly

original in its use of light and shadow to illustrate a moving drama, and the coordination between lights and sound is incredible.

The background and stagecraft for this truly unique tourist attraction are also quite interesting. The program's creator, "Skinny" Winn, an electrical contractor from Texas, was first inspired by the sight of the Great White Throne in Zion National Park, a pink-white sandstone monolith that juts high into the sky above the floor of the largest canyon in the park.

After two years of experimenting with lights, Skinny contacted Park Service officials and proposed a night program in Zion based upon lighting the Great White Throne after dark. His proposal was turned down as "too artificial."

Somewhat discouraged at this rebuff, but unwilling to give up his idea, Skinny next prepared a sample light-and-sound program and presented it first in Texas, then to a group of state and city officials in Utah. In each case, reactions to the test show were favorable.

Thus encouraged, Skinny started looking for a site suitable for a regular presentation. He investigated the areas

around Sedona, Arizona, and Callup, New Mexico, Palo Duro Canyon State Park in Texas, and the Colorado River gorge near Moab, Utah. He finally chose this last setting because of the river, the road that paralleled it, the spectacular cliffs, and because of the cooperation offered by Utah officials.

The special boat required by the Canyonlands By Night program was constructed in Texas. It is powered by a big marine engine which has a jet drive unit. The boat seats 90 passengers and its sound system is based on two large Altec-Lansing speakers. The dramatic recording of geologic and human history was researched and written by a professor of geology at Dixie State College in St. George, Utah.

The lighting equipment used for the show is a marvel of engineering. It consists of a butane-powered truck pulling a 50-kilowatt generator on a trailer. The generator powers the various lights used in the program. The battery of three 5000-watt floods, four brilliant 1500-watt quartz-iodine lamps, and seven special-effects lamps are mounted in the bed of the truck, on powered turret controls similar to those used for anti-aircraft

guns. These lamps, together with two more on the boat, produce a wide range of lighting effects, from floodlighting whole cliffs, to flashes of lightning, to fading twilight or bursting of dawn.

The whole system of lights, and the method for coordinating them with the sound track, was developed and built by Skinny Winn, and all who have seen the dramatically different program that has resulted are indebted to him for his perseverance in following up his initial idea, and for his creative efforts in developing his highly professional show. It is a truly beautiful and unique presentation—one you'll never forget! □

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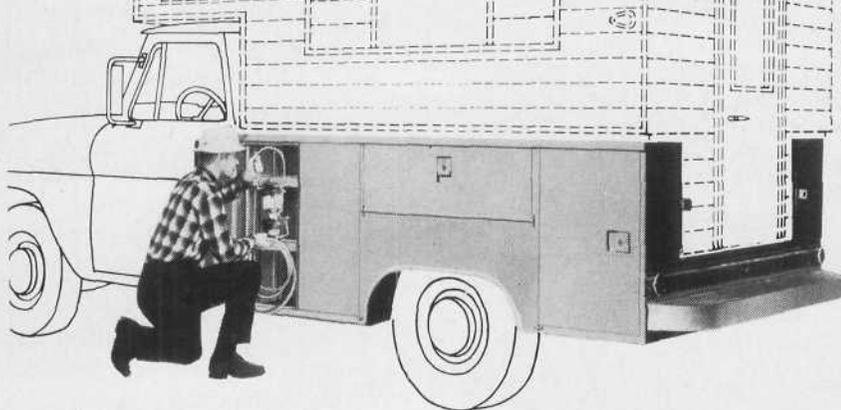


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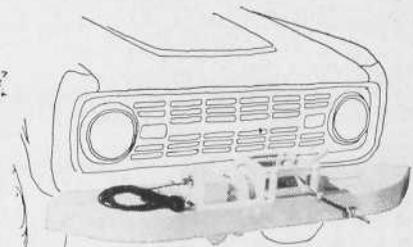


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DESERT QUICKSILVER
Continued from Page 31

ers, and others on his cheeks, about the size of openings, and hence where his head and the rest of him can squeeze through—a real promoter of safe passage. The coyote's nose whiskers, shorter in proportion and less of use in his open plains living (a style which calls mainly for speed over long stretches), are just not much good.

Foxy also engages in another offbeat tactic shared only with the fennec—a long-eared desert fox living in Africa. This is the rare ability among canines to climb a tree—which is exactly what he does when he can't make it to a hole or into brush. Now, this is most upsetting

to coyote and scientist alike, neither of whom can figure out how he does it. Up he goes, sometimes leaping from branch to branch, sometimes seeming to hug the trunk on the way up. Zoologist Terres reported one 20 feet up in a nearly vertical willow; Yaeger, one up a 60 foot pine.

Even an inspection royale by Anatomist Hildebrand failed to turn up a satisfactory answer of how body-wise he can do it. He doesn't have curved hook claws like a cat; he doesn't even have the sharp nails of a squirrel. What may help is the fact that he may be able to rotate his forearm more than other canids, which would then give him a better grasp and perhaps a better reach in climbing. Again, his face whiskers may help with their quick-touch news. Too, he has similar sensory hairs (three to a toe) on his feet, which would aid in climbing footwork. This brings up a suggestion that maybe there is, indeed, a strong connection nerve-musclewise in the grey fox body that contributes greatly to his climbing ability that is unknown at the present time.

Mostly, Anatomist Hildebrand thinks foxy's psychological point of view is important. The grey fox wants to, and likes, to climb. His kind has been at it for a long time, both in escaping enemies and in finding tasty snacks of food waiting upstairs for a fox enterprising enough to climb for it.

Fruits, nuts, seeds, prickly pears, vegetable tidbits are all on the fox's menu, with grasshoppers and other insects caught with skill and munched with pleasure. But mainly, this fellow is a great little hunter, plying his trade by cunning and stealth, and for the most part at night. Informed by his sharp nose that dinner is nearby, he proceeds to follow it, moving quietly and cautiously through the darkness, a slow step at a time in a kind of nose-to-the-ground fox tip-toe. Until . . . pounce! and he has it. What? Anything tasty at hand: maybe a pocket mouse too intent on stuffing seeds into its face to pay attention; or a kangaroo rat that stopped to kick a flea; or a lizard on insect patrol, or best of all, a rabbit just a second too slow on take-off. Small stuff like mice or lizards are munched down whole, rabbits skinned first, fox style, using teeth and toenails on the job. Foxy is apt to dine well, being so quick and handy at catching things,

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but smart also in his selection of habitat, since here, too, among the rocks and brush dwell the many kinds of small animals that make up the bulk of his bill of fare. Eggs and birds are probably also taken, although the grey fox may not be as passionately fond of feathered food as that notorious chicken-fancying cousin of his.

Take a Gambel quail, for example, a chubby little bird considered delicious by many a hunter. Yet, Harold Marsh reports strange goings on at his bird feeding station near Globe, Arizona. It seems that a grey fox came to drink, but that quail feeding there, while making a loud fuss, did not flee in all directions as they always did at the advent of a cat. In fact, they approached within three feet of the fox, and stood watching so that he had to push through them to leave. Next trip back by the fox for water was greeted with no comment from the quail, they, in fact, wandering off after him when he left, returning shortly to feed again. Had the fox been a red one, Marsh's bird feeding station would shortly have been a lonesome place.

Like other members of the fox clan; the grey tends to be more solitary in his ways than others of the dog family and is perhaps even more secretive than others of his kin. Zoologist William Sheldon, in looking into the matter of longevity of foxes in New York State, peered at the teeth of many of them, and on the basis of tooth wear he saw that only 8.5% of his red foxes were middle age, while some 30% of the grey showed they had reached this stage successfully. So, he concluded, that while some red foxes might finally make it to about 10 years of age before handing in their dinner pail, more greys would, probably thanks to their more seclusive habits.

Not that they are always so solitary-minded.

The social whirl gets underway around January or early February, perhaps earlier since the males are fertile by mid-November in the fox's southern range, altitude in the desert regions slowing things down. Nursery dens are well hidden in rock fissures, or holes well protected by rocks and tree roots, or even far back in an old dead log. The gestation period is some 53 days, paralleling that of the red fox, and not the longer 63 usual in the dog tribe. The average litter is three to four, and the pups themselves are small,

weighing in at only about three ounces at birth. Zoologist John Wood, working with a fox family in his laboratory, found that for the first 19 days, the pups did little more than double their weight. Then something surprising happens, for in the next four days there's a big spurt, and good weight gain until at the age of 78 days they weigh two and one-half pounds.

At about three months of age, they start accompanying their mother on food forays, and quickly learn from observation the tricks of the trade. Smart as they are by nature, they need schooling in how to pounce and grab fast, and plenty of practice to be able to do it successfully. They get their permanent teeth at about five months, and, of course, by this time can handle about anything foodwise.

Interesting to say, the young vixens start family raising early, Wood finding that in a population he studied, about 50 percent of the young were produced by females in their first breeding season, 33 percent by the second season group, 11 percent by third seasoners, and less than one percent by the fourth season veterans. Cogitating on this, it would appear that the ladies tend to tire of family chores as they grow older, and it would suggest that a given fox population might, indeed, thus be kept in better vigor by the younger matrons, a matter of importance in species survival, particularly under the rigors of desert life.

A great deal remains to be learned about the grey fox that will take some real doing to accomplish. Carrying on his business affairs under cover of night, he is exceedingly hard to observe in the field, the more so because he knows his desert terrain like the back of his paw, particularly where the thickest and prickliest of brush grows and how to trick zoologists into it. Up a tree at last, he's hard to dislodge alive, and after sizing up the situation, apt to come pell-mell down and away in a flurry that leaves dismay and cursing behind him.

All in all, getting the real low-down on the private life of the grey fox is just about as easy as trying to pick up quicksilver and keep it corralled. Thus, it would be no surprise if some day some irate zoologist did not add this little fact to *Urocyon cinereoargenteus's* already long scientific name, if he can find an impolite enough Greek word to express it. □

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Rambling on Rocks

by Glenn and Martha Vargas

BAJA CALIFORNIA: A NEW ROAD INTO A ROCKY LAND

MANY INDIVIDUALS and organizations, both here and in Mexico, have been making glowing statements about the new paved highway from Tijuana to Cabo San Lucas. Having traveled over portions of it, before the road was completed, we feel that it is a good road, but not necessarily as good as the glowing terms describing it.

The road is a good piece of engineering. It traverses the high ridges and hillsides, and avoids washes and other trouble spots as much as is possible. It is, however, quite narrow, and thus must be traveled at speeds not in excess of 45 miles per hour. At this speed, the road can be considered safe. At higher speeds, the lack of vision around curves, and the small clearance between passing vehicles can create dangerous situations.

Our experiences with the road down Baja California began more than 18

years ago. The road at that time, as now, was designated as Mexico's No. 1. We many times chuckled about the condition of their No. 1 highway. We consider ourselves relative newcomers to the road, but we found very little reliable information about it. Our very first experience, before we even saw it, is a case in point.

Prior to crossing the border into Mexico, we stopped at the Calexico office of the Mexican Consul and inquired if we could take our truck across the Gulf of California from La Paz to Mazatlan on some type of boat. The answer we got was, "Senor, you cannot drive to La Paz." No matter how we phrased the question, we got the same answer. We were not deterred, and drove nearly 1,000 bumpy miles to La Paz, then got our boat.

For anyone that has not been over the road, it is almost impossible to describe its condition. Actually, it was very passable, but if one wished to keep vehicle and occupants intact for the journey, a 10 mile per hour average speed was a must. Huge rocks seemed to suddenly spring from the center of the road. Deep washes confronted us regularly. Look about at the scenery, and one of these hazards took us unawares.

Before we left, many of our friends asked if we were going there to hunt rocks. This was really not our intention, as we wanted to see what the peninsula looked like. Quickly we adopted a somewhat trite answer by stating that if we saw minerals sticking out of the middle of the road, we would investigate them.

Yes, we saw many, many rocks sticking up out of the middle of the road, but to our complete surprise, we actually found minerals—worth collecting, in fact—sticking up in the middle of the road! We were less than 200 miles below the border, only just getting in to the "wild" part of the peninsula, when we came to a turquoise mine. The dump was used for the road, and we stopped and collected what we considered to be poor to perhaps fair turquoise nuggets. On our return, we gave each of our students a small bag of nuggets. Imagine our surprise when they began to show us quite good gems they were cutting from those nuggets!

We had another similar experience, this time with a mineral not of gem quality. We were well below the center of the peninsula in a region of brown lavas,

when the road suddenly changed and looked like black pavement. Investigation showed it to be good quality magnetite, a black iron ore. We found a few crystals in small openings in some pieces.

Collectable "rocks" in the middle of the road surprised us, but we were really amazed to find little else to interest the mineral or gem collector. There are four or five mines that produce travertine, better known as Mexican onyx. The material is mined in huge blocks that are later cut into slabs for building stone. Small pieces were added to our already loaded vehicle, and some became bookends upon our return.

A few abandoned mines produced some interesting specimens, and an area many miles in extent, containing very worthless agate, was about all we could find.

The peninsula is really a rocky land. The northern fourth of its length is a high granite mountain range, an extension of the mountains of Southern California. Here, in later years, some fine gem minerals were found. The lower three-fourths of the peninsula is mostly volcanic, with extensive lava flows, and numerous extinct volcanoes piercing the horizon.

At intervals, some small granite mountains and sedimentary formations break the monotony of the lavas. We never ceased to marvel at the seeming sameness that was continually changing as we bumped along.

If there are very few minerals of interest to the rockhound, then you may ask why we repeatedly returned, and are now writing about Baja California in our column. If we subtract minerals from the list of things the peninsula has to offer, there is still plenty left. The most intriguing aspect of its rugged mountains is its vegetative cover.

For a lover of desert scenery, there is probably no region in the whole world that is more beautiful. The amount of plantlife is almost unbelievable. Some types are prolific and unusual, creating a bizarre landscape. The most interesting is the *cirio* tree, sometimes likened to an upside-down carrot. It is a close relative to our own ocotillo, which also appears here. Next is the elephant tree. Actually, there are three species that have thick, writhing branches that somewhat resemble an elephant.



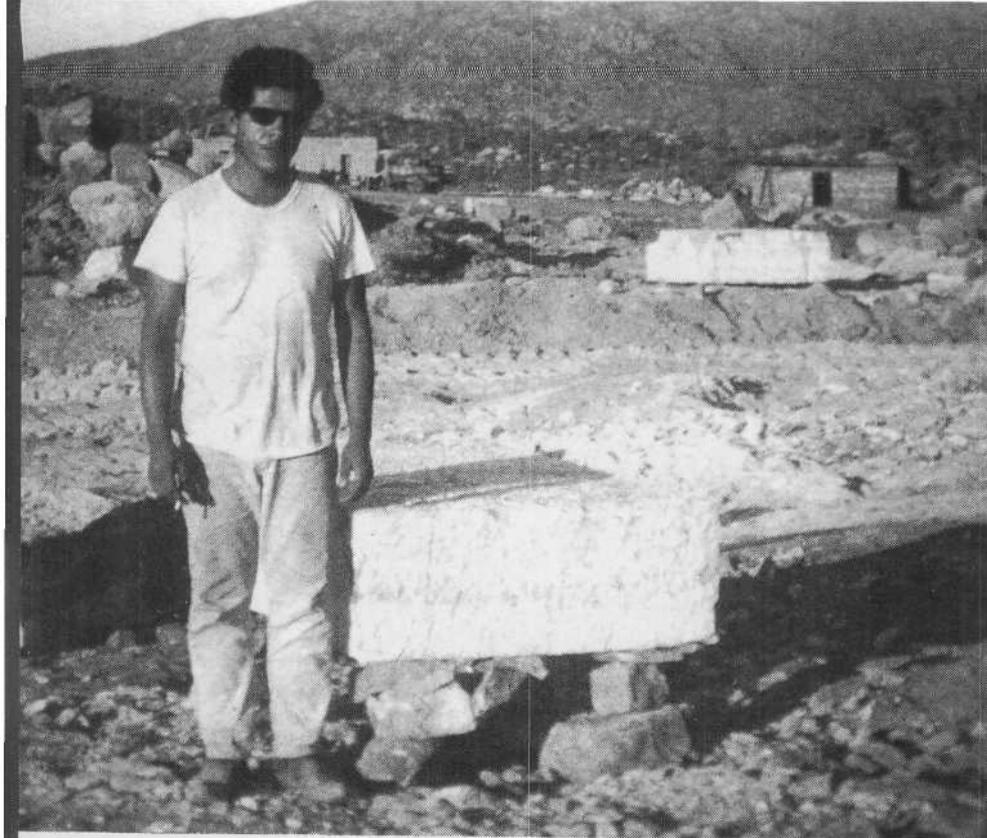
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Blocks of travertine at El Marmolita.

The central peninsula is lush, with the above trees mixed with numerous species of cactus; a huge one, that resembles the saguaro of Arizona, is called *cardon*. On the Pacific slope, the cold westerly winds create a bleak desert where many of the plants are absent. Those that remain are lying almost prostrate, and some grow partially underground to escape the constant wind.

Our original interest was really as naturalists, and our first aim was its wildlife, followed by geological formations. We were far from disappointed with either, and have spent many hours studying both.

We had not traveled far down the road before discovering another item of interest: the people. As we explored, we found that these people of small stature and friendly smiles were the greatest drawing power of all.

When we stopped at a primitive service station to buy fuel, the lady of the house would insist on inviting Marth in to sit while the two men went through the complicated and circuitous job of siphoning gasoline from 50-gallon drums, into cans, and then into our truck. The home into which Marth was invited usually had great cracks in the walls, and the best chair was invariably a packing box made over, but the graciousness of the hospitality dimmed our vision to the

lack of facilities that we so naturally take for granted.

The thing that first prevented us from thoroughly enjoying these gracious people was the language barrier. As we gained some proficiency in Spanish, we found them to be more than patient with our faltering speech. As our command of their language grew (it is still not fluent), we found that we could now enter the portals of intimate hospitality, and understand and share their lives.

One of our most treasured memories is of being invited into a fisherman's "house" that was really the shade of a tree. When we were invited to enter, we could not be sure what was "in the house" and what was out, but the offer of the only rickety chairs told us that we were honored guests. We had the privilege of visiting with them while the Senor filleted shark meat to be later dried, and the Senora sat in the crotch of the tree and breast-fed her tiny baby.

Today, there is a new smooth highway that we can travel at least four times our old speed, but the bumpy roads still exist. They branch off frequently and lead to further beautiful vistas, and terminate at ranch houses filled with happy, hospitable people. This is the real Baja California, but the occupants of a car speeding down the highway will never see it, unless they tarry a while.

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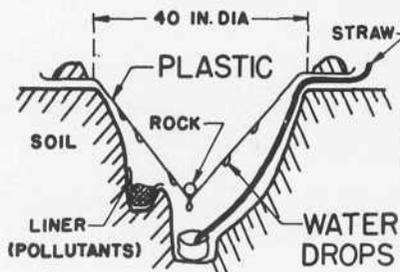
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Letters to the Editor

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From Den To Eternity . . .

Re Mr. H. W. Hall of Moriarty, New Mexico asking for aid in ridding an area of rattlesnakes, not long ago, in the Palos Verdes Hills of San Pedro, Calif., an earth mover for a residential development uncovered a large cache of rattlesnakes. This presented a most potent problem, and one which required immediate remedial action.

According to the press reports, several large hogs were brought into the area, and in three days there was no sign of a rattler anywhere in the vicinity. Apparently the animals are immune to snake venom, and take great delight in vigorously pursuing the reptiles, stamping them to death, then devouring them.

I enjoy your magazine, and have garnered some very interesting information from it. Being a project director and mental health therapist at Fairview State Hospital, Costa Mesa, Calif., we make many trips with retarded patients to the desert to behold its beauties, collect specimens of rocks, etc. The therapeutic value we attach to these trips is impossible to estimate, it being of exceedingly great importance, and, most pleasurable.

FRED M. BARNES,
Costa Mesa, California.

I am responding to a letter in *Desert*, Feb., 1974, from Mr. H. W. Hall who states that he has a family of "rattlers" living under his house, and asks what he can do to get rid of them.

My husband, who is a reptile keeper at the Columbus, Ohio Zoological Gardens, says that the noises that Mr. Hall is hearing are probably rats or mice. But if he has seen the snakes in question, his main problem is still rodents. Rats and mice are a main food source for rattlesnakes.

Mr. Hall should first clean up any area where the rodents could live, such as a wood pile or any junk pile, even in a garage. Make sure that any garbage is in tightly sealed containers. Then he should trap out the rodents. One way to do that is with snap traps that can be bought at any food or hardware store, and a good basic bait being rolled oats and peanut butter mixed.

If there are any snakes, they won't stick around long with no food in sight.

PAT GOODE,
Delaware, Ohio.

Success Is What We Need . . .

Regarding your February issue and the story, "Growing Copper," I never cease to be amazed at the continuing ingenuity of the true desert mechanic, inventor and mining man. Tolley and Muller of the Muller Mining Company are from the old mold and I just wish there were enough of them around so you could run a similar story every month. Tales of success are what we need.

Their successful efforts to circumvent impossible smelter charges and turn out practically pure electrolytic copper from a small operation are truly amazing. My congratulations to them both. May their kind ever inhabit the earth.

JOHN SOUTHWORTH,
Burbank, California.



Caretaker Of The Cliffs . . .

Your October, 1973 issue carried a story of New Mexico's Puye Cliffs and caretaker Margarito Tafoya, by Buddy Mays.

On a visit to the Cliffs, we met and talked with Mr. Tafoya. Since he had not seen the article, we gave him our copy of *Desert*. We believe you can see how interested he was from the enclosed picture.

Your *Desert Magazine* has led us to many interesting places. On this last trip, we also took the scenic ride from Chama on the C&T Railroad.

JIM and ANN OLSON,
Anaheim, California.

Delightful Memories . . .

We never dreamed the desert could be so wonderfully beautiful until taking a trip last winter to Oregon Pipe and Caliente.

Your magazine, with its superb pictures and most interesting articles, brings delightful memories of our experiences.

We find it impossible to get away from our snowy environment this winter, but find it most enjoyable planning for 1975. Your magazine will make the things to do and see truly boundless.

MR. & MRS. SCHMIDT.

Calendar of Events

MARCH 23 & 24, 16th Annual Tournament of Gems of Pasadena Lapidary Society, Wm. Davies Bldg., Farnsworth Park, Altadena, Calif. Exhibits and demonstrations of many phases of the lapidary art, silversmithing, selected dealers and refreshments. Admission free.

MARCH 28 through MAY 5, 1974, Lancaster Wildflower Show, sponsored by the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce. Wildflower Center, located at Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 155 E. Avenue I, Lancaster, California. Free admission and parking.

APRIL 13 & 14, Community Flower Show sponsored by the Riverside Community Flower Show Assoc., Riverside Memorial Auditorium, 7th & Lemon, Riverside, Calif. Admission: Adults, \$1.25, children free with adults.

APRIL 14, Red Rock Canyon Annual Easter Sunrise Services, 25 miles north of Mojave, California on Highway 14, 5:15 A.M. Plenty of space for cars, campers and motor homes. Services are presented by the Red Rock Canyon Easter Sunrise Service Assoc., inter-denominational.

APRIL 27 & 28, Annual Wildflower Festival, Community Center at the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, Calif. This event combines wildflower arrangements, a wildflower identification room and other displays related to the upper Mojave Desert. Free admission and parking.

MAY 1, 2 & 3, Solar Heating, Cooling and Energy Conservation Conference, Holiday Inn, Denver, Colorado.

MAY 4 & 5, Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by the Mission Peak Gem & Mineral Society. Fremont Community Center, 40204 Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont, Calif. Sterling Silver "fairytale" castles integrated into Geodes by award winning jewelry sculpturer Joe Lazer to be featured.

MAY 11-27, 48th Annual Wildflower Show sponsored by the Julian Woman's Club, lower floor of the Julian Town Hall, Julian, California. Free admission.

JUNE 28, 29, & 30, Wasatch Gem Society's 14th Annual Gem Show, National Guard Armory, 5891 South State St., Murray, Utah.

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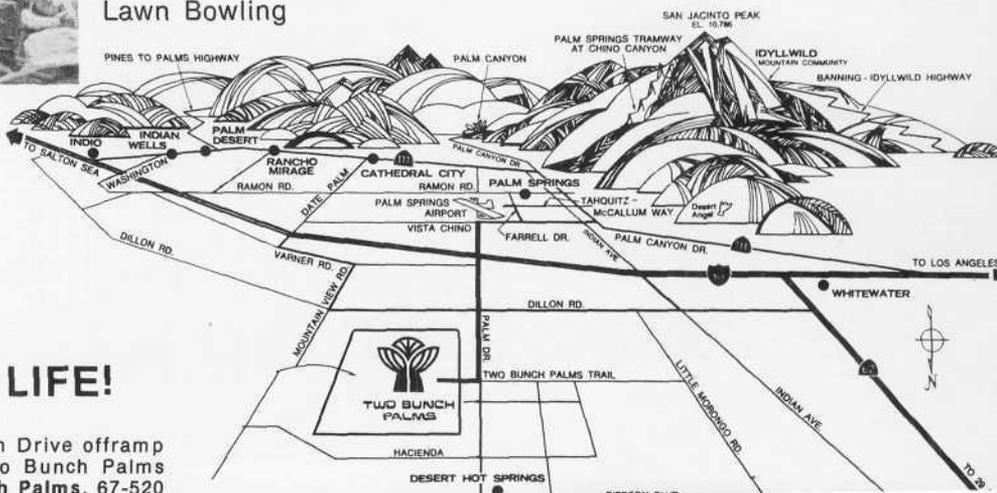
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