Melvin Dummar Revisited • Atlantic City Aliens
Louis L'Amour on the Lode

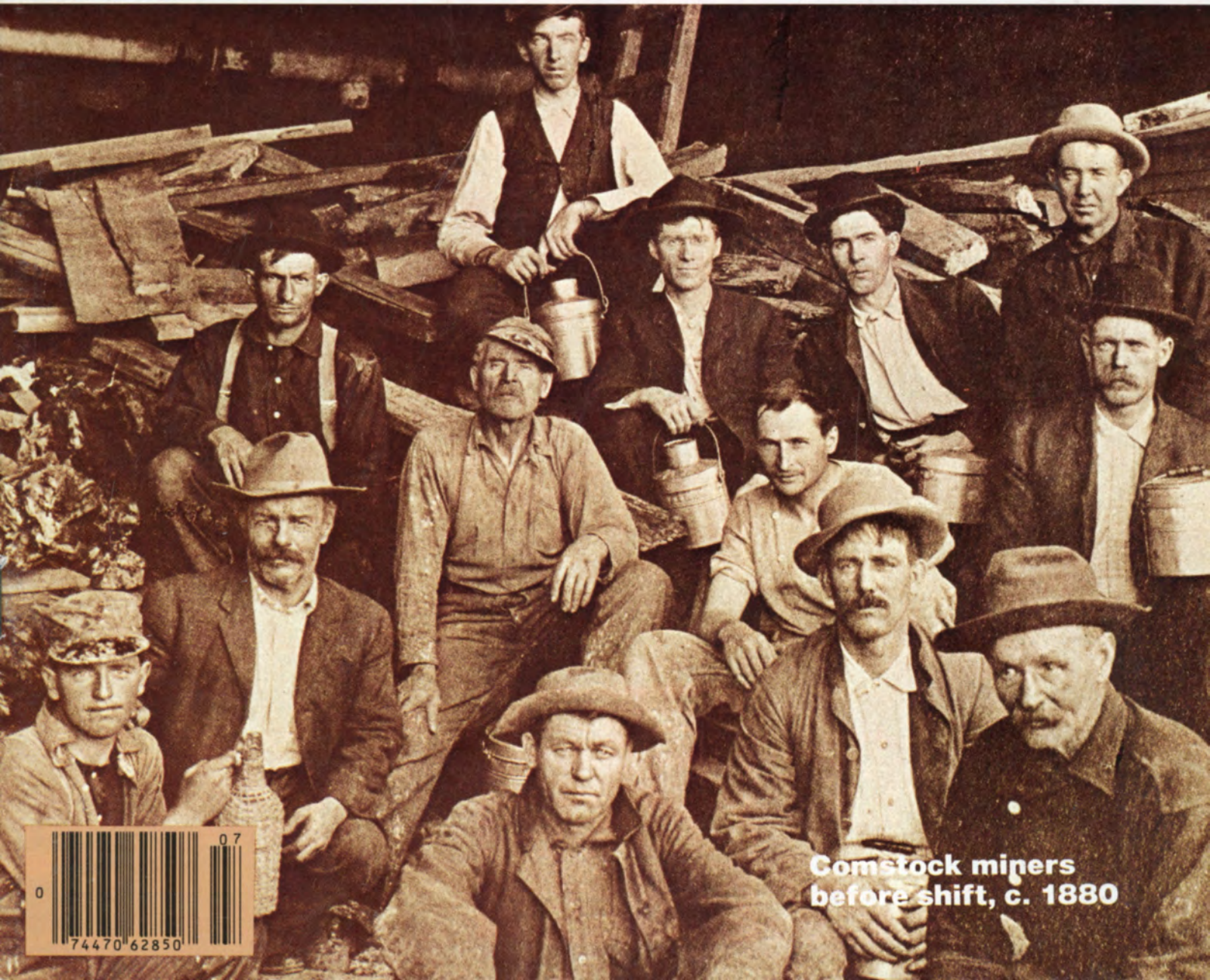
NEVADA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE REAL WEST JULY/AUGUST 1981 $1.50

VIRGINIA CITY: History & Honky Tonk

LAS VEGAS: Hot Tips to Keep Cool

John McPhee's BASIN AND RANGE



Comstock miners before shift, c. 1880

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	Joan Rivers Fred Travalena Aug. 6 thru 19





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Editorial

Embarrassing the Editor and Other Pleasures

Nevada Magazine's March/April issue, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of gaming, was a landmark. More stories than ever before; more pages in the publication; largest number of copies printed in our history.

This issue is another landmark.

Beginning on page 26, we excerpt a book by as graceful a writer as walks the planet. His name is John McPhee, and the chapter is from his new book, *Basin and Range.*

McPhee's magazine work is published almost exclusively in *The New Yorker.* Of his many books, his best known is *Coming into the Country,* a stunning examination of the human ecology of Alaska.

Each of McPhee's books is marked by a taut narrative focused on characters central to his issue so that his readers are carried effortlessly by the flow of the story. At the same time it is his genius to pause along the way, examining with clarity and elegance such strange and difficult worlds as anthropology *(The Pine Barrens),* aerodynamics *(The Deltoid Pumpkin Seed),* politics and voluntary simplicity *(Coming into the Country)* and now, with *Basin and Range,* the plate-tectonics theory of geology.

If this sounds intimidating, it is anything but. Because his writing is so fresh, so energetic and so strong, McPhee readers stand in line when a new book is published. They ask only the pleasure of turning undiscovered McPhee pages.

Others read McPhee because he is such a remarkably fine teacher.

Professional writers are compulsive McPhee collectors; he is the exemplar.

Nevada Magazine readers will discover yet another reason to relish the new McPhee book: much of it is about the Silver State.

Such lavish praise will likely embarrass McPhee; his writing reveals a modest man.

Equal praise is due *Nevada's* editor, Caroline Hadley, for arranging the excerpt. Compliments are almost sure to discomfit Hadley also, but it is infrequent that a contributor gets his hands on the editor's column, and embarrassed or not, Hadley will have to tough this one out. Most editors would pay a fortune to have a McPhee piece in their magazines but they wouldn't dream of presuming to ask a writer of McPhee's stature to contribute. Hadley would beard a grizzly. She wrote the publisher of *Basin and Range* and was told to deal with McPhee through *The New Yorker. The New Yorker* told her McPhee made his own decisions about where his byline would appear. Hadley shipped three or four back copies of *Nevada* off to Princeton, New Jersey, where McPhee lives and writes, and was given prompt permission to excerpt. It says a good deal about Hadley's achievement in making *Nevada* a first rate magazine that McPhee agreed to have the last chapter of his book appear in its pages.

There are a few other signs of the increasing stature of *Nevada Magazine* in this issue. Besides John McPhee, William Jeanes' name appears on the contents page. Jeanes' heart is in Nevada, although his spleen is in New York along with his feet and neck, condominium and office. His work has been in *Nevada* before—a labor of love for Jeanes, whose adult job is a very lofty one indeed in the world of advertising.

Notice also the size of the issue ("book size" it's called by glinty-eyed competitors). Ninety-six pages is larger by half than *Nevada's* standard. It is a consequence once more of Hadley's talent and perseverance.

Clearly Hadley and *Nevada Magazine* are on a roll. When Hadley wins, we all win; staffers, contributors, readers alike.

For some time now, Hadley has been issued standing invitations to lecture on regional magazines at seminars put on for professionals by professionals, a mark of the profound respect in which she is held by her peers. If we are not careful, she will be spirited away by the likes of, well, *The New Yorker.* In that case, we will lose not only Hadley but McPhee and future McPhees, a future too bleak to contemplate.—*Leon Mandel*

Leon Mandel's latest books are Fast Lane Summer *(Van Nostrand Reinhold, June 1981), and* Gambling Man: The Life and Times of William Fisk Harrah *(Doubleday, January 1982). He is a regular* Nevada Magazine *contributor.*



HITTING THE JACKPOT

Your 50-year gaming issue is simply terrific. Congratulations on the tremendous amount of work put into it. I shall treasure it along with your Centennial (1964) issue.

Dorothy H. Gill
San Francisco, CA.

Congratulations on a superb gaming issue (March/April 1981). All the time and effort paid off. It was a class effort in content, graphics and overall format.

Howard Schwartz, Editor
Gambler's Book Club
Las Vegas, NV.

Your last issue (March/April, Gaming Special) was a real dude. I do hope in the future you are able to do better.

Glenn Roden
Panaca, NV.

Your "Special Issue" (March/April 1981) is sensational.

RAdm. L. B. McCuddin
Reno, NV.

Your Special Edition for the 50th anniversary of legal gaming is terrific!

David Graham
Cave Creek, AZ.

Your special issue on 50 years of gaming is superb.

Lela Ewert
Woodland, CA.

Your special issue on gaming is wonderful.

Mrs. Helen Phillips
Easton, PA.

I am a pioneer of the State of Nevada—Virginia City and Minden parents, UNR graduate, and until recently a taxpayer in Reno. I am not interested in a whole issue of Nevada Magazine devoted to the gambling industry. Unless you can promise something of more interest to us old Nevadans, something dedicated to the worthiness of the state other than Las Vegas, I am not interested in reading your magazine.

Emmeline Christensen Grant
Honolulu, Hawaii

Don't you think that one issue in 50 years should be devoted to the state's largest industry?—Ed

I have been reading the Nevada Magazine since the Highway Dept. first put it out but I don't like all the gambling advertising in it. Gambling has ruined Nevada and it has hurt the magazine. Please cancel.

Harold Curran
Reno, NV.

Actually gambling has saved Nevada from becoming a depressed area, has paid most of our taxes and kept the quality of life one of the highest in the U.S. Without gambling there would be no Nevada Magazine; we simply couldn't afford it.—Ed.

Your 50th Year Gaming Edition was terrific! Previous mining stories and map, rates near the top.

James Lesniewski
Chicago, IL.

The magazine has lost a lot of its warmth. It's more like a big commercial enterprise financed solely by gaming. Nevada would be better if it included more stories on the natives rather than the show people.

Anonymous
Las Vegas, NV.

What about 50 years of entertainment in Nevada?

Shirley Preston
Las Vegas, NV.

READER ALERT

Enjoyed very much your special issue of "50 Years of Gaming in Nevada," but I must write to you of the amazing coincidence of two separate gamblers (pgs.80 & 102) who made original bets of $40 and subsequently ran them to $20,000. Don't you agree that these circumstances are remarkable?

I love going to Reno and Lake Tahoe and am working on a bank-roll now for my next expedition.

M. Randisi
Albany, CA.

DOLPH WASN'T THAT WAY

Concerning "Horse Sense and Nonsense" by Harry Webb (May/June 1981):

Some of the old time residents of Carlin find Harry Webb's article amusing and I probably would have if he had used fictitious names in his story. There wasn't much truth in anything he wrote. The part about Dolph Berning killing a hobo because he wanted to come to town for a loaf of bread was slandering a very good man and police officer.

Dolph Berning, the town marshal in the story, happened to be my father and he did have to kill a hobo but not for wanting to come to town to buy a loaf of bread. At that time there were as many as a hundred hobos on one train coming through Carlin and it was just good sense not to let them off to take over the small town. This particular time the hobo pulled a large knife on Dad and slashed him across the throat and would have finished the job if Dad hadn't used his gun. It was the one and only time he used it in the 25 years he was Constable and I know he deeply regretted having to do so.

He probably would have lived a few more years if he had believed in using a gun. The boy who shot him had a record of assault,

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robbery and a car theft across the U.S.—in fact they found $300 worth of stolen jewelry in his abandoned car. As for some saying "Dolph got his today and good riddance" a very few might have, but Dad's funeral was held in the High School Auditorium to accommodate the 300 people from around this part of the state that came to pay their respects to a good man and a fine police officer.

Margaret Berning Woods
Carlin, NV.

I was somewhat surprised to learn members of the Dolph Berning family had taken offense over my President Hoover story and said I did not know what I was writing about. I was there.

First, I only write what I see and hear, as in the case of the black hobo who insisted on getting to a store to buy a loaf of bread. One of Dolph's duties was to keep boxcar bums from entering the business section, but that man had *money*.

Secondly, when Dolph was killed by two young Easterners who had grabbed George Bank's truck in Elko, only to be halted by Dolph's roadblock at Carlin, I asked Dino Jazzi about all the fuss and guns. He replied, "Dolph just got killed!" It was then that "Good riddance" was said by a young fellow who had a grudge against Dolph.

My family and the Bernings were close friends and Dolph and I had mining interests together. So I would not want to speak a disparaging word against my friend, although Dolph was not loved by everyone.

Harry E. Webb
Tujunga, CA.

We enjoy Nevada Magazine so much and especially Harry Webb's stories of the old days. Keep up the good work.

John & Irene Ratcliff
Gardena, CA.

The old-time cowboy (Harry Webb) who writes those very short stories for you is absolutely fascinating. He gives us brilliant vignettes of Nevada's past that do not appear in any history book.

F. Dixon
Reading, CA.

THE ROAD TO MX

In May 1980 I drove to Pioche via Tonopah, Warm Springs on to Highway 25 over to 93. The area all along 25 was one of the most beautiful drives I've ever enjoyed. All sizes, shapes and colors of mountains, animals and birds, types of foliage that I'd never seen before. And the wonderful, peaceful quiet! I'll remember that trip forever.

It is a damn shame the MX people want to ruin it and the lovely canyons east of 93.

Mrs. E. E. McDaniel
Sparks, NV.

Bravo!—Ed.

SOME IMPROVEMENTS

The magazine is great but I think it would be greater if there was something more about hunting and fishing.

Ella J. Smith
Reno, NV.

Nevada being a state so full of American Indian history, a state with much happening among its American Indian people, why not devote a section each month on Nevada Indian life? Present articles devoted to Indian arts, lifestyes, ancient history and present history. *Arizona Highways* did, why not you?

David Sterling
Culver City, CA.

Thanks, Sterling. You will be seeing more on Nevada Indians in future issues.—Ed.

NEVADA EXPOSED

I enjoy every part of my Nevada Magazine. It's second best to being there in person. My only complaint is that the cover comes off so easily when it's packed around a lot and I take it everywhere with me until I have read it cover to cover.

Barb Doster
Mapleton, OR.

I liked the magazine so much I had it sent to my friends back East and they now love it and subscribe.

J. R. Laning
Las Vegas, NV.

(Continued on page 11)



BILL AND JOYCE ANDERSON'S

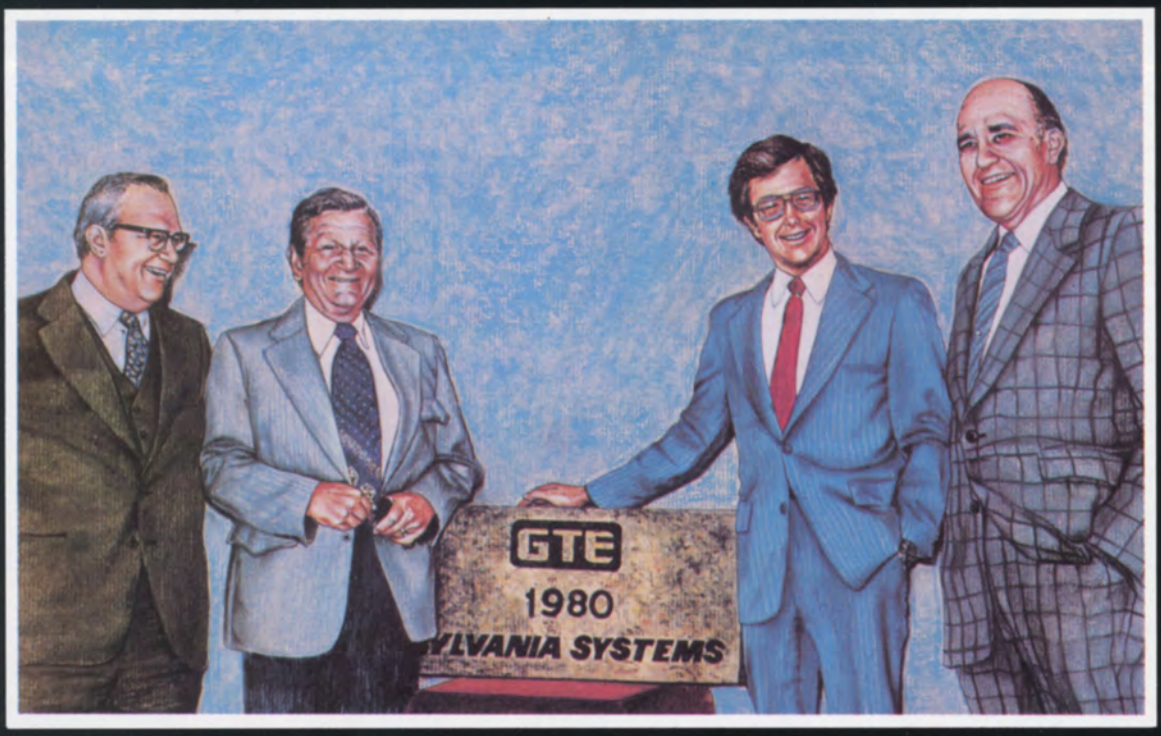


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MUENCH'S GALLERY

David Muench, one of the Southwest's great landscape photographers, presents selections from his Nevada portfolio in each issue.

High above the timberline, whipped by wind, rain and snow, the bristlecone pine has endured nature's blustering for more than 5,000 years. Some of these rare trees are found in valleys, but the oldest bristlecones thrive on frosty peaks above 7,500 feet.

Stripped of their bark, the trees become weathered diaries of the centuries. Some were seedlings 2,600 years before Christ. They are nature's oldest living things.

The hardy bristlecone lives in several Nevada ranges. The trees at left are found in the northeastern cirque of 13,061-foot Wheeler Peak near Lehman Caves National Monument (see page 23). At right are bristlecones on 11,918-foot Charleston Peak west of Las Vegas. Other ancient forests have been found near Boundary Peak in the White Mountains and in the southern Rubies. The trees are protected by law, but trails in the Lehman Caves area offer hikers a chance to pay homage to these gnarled ancients. *—AH*





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LETTERS

(Continued from page 6)

I love Nevada. Because of circumstances which I cannot change it is impossible for me to return to Nevada to live. So I look to the Nevada Magazine to keep my heart from breaking.

Mrs. W. N. Jenkins
Summit, MS.

WHAT ABOUT VIRGINIA CITY?

I would like to see more articles on the history and of the old towns and people. Especially Virginia City. Thanks for a great magazine.

The Osterlohs
Sumner, WA.

See special Virginia City section inside.—Ed.

I think you are doing a great job. I have no criticism, only praise, keep it up. My out of state daughter has a subscription and our four other children all read our copy.

Pauline Sullivan
Las Vegas, NV.

I was hoping your magazine would be as good as the Arizona Highways but it is nowhere near as good. Please cancel.

Ms. S. Zubripke
Richmond, Ont., Canada

I've taken a lot of state/travel magazines but yours seems to be the only one I "can't give up" each renewal time and one other (Arizona Highways) is really beautiful yet I didn't renew.

Mrs. Kay Clemence
Salem, OR.

Wonderful, beautiful, literate, fun-loving! That's Nevada! That's Nevada Magazine!

Richard W. Grefrath
Reno, NV.

We enjoy your magazine and look forward to receiving the next issue. Enjoy letting our out of town guests read them also.

Norman R. Coleman
Las Vegas, NV.

I do not care to renew—too much advertising.

Anonymous,
Lincoln, NB.

Most magazines use 50 percent advertising, 50 percent editorial; we take an average of 33 percent advertising, which leaves more room for stories, better exposure for advertisers!—Ed.

MAKE IT A MONTHLY

I enjoy the complete magazine but it's all too short. I read from cover to cover. Would be a great monthly.

Virginia Turner
Santa Ana, CA.

Please make Nevada Magazine a monthly publication!

Joanne Feller
Torrance, CA.

I'd just like to say I wish Nevada Magazine was published monthly! I have subscribed to New Mexico, Arizona Highways, Vermont Magazine, Ohio Magazine. Yours is still the best.

M. C. Little
Fairfield, OH.

THE CASE FOR DESOLATION

In my opinion Nevada is the most beautiful state I've ever seen. The desolation of its deserts, its small towns, and its lonely highways are what give it this overwhelming beauty. More photographs of the state through photo essays would add substantially to an already excellent magazine.

Robert Fenkel
Edison, NJ

Thanks, Fenkel. You'll note that this issue is 50 percent larger than usual and that we are paying attention to desires like yours.—Ed.

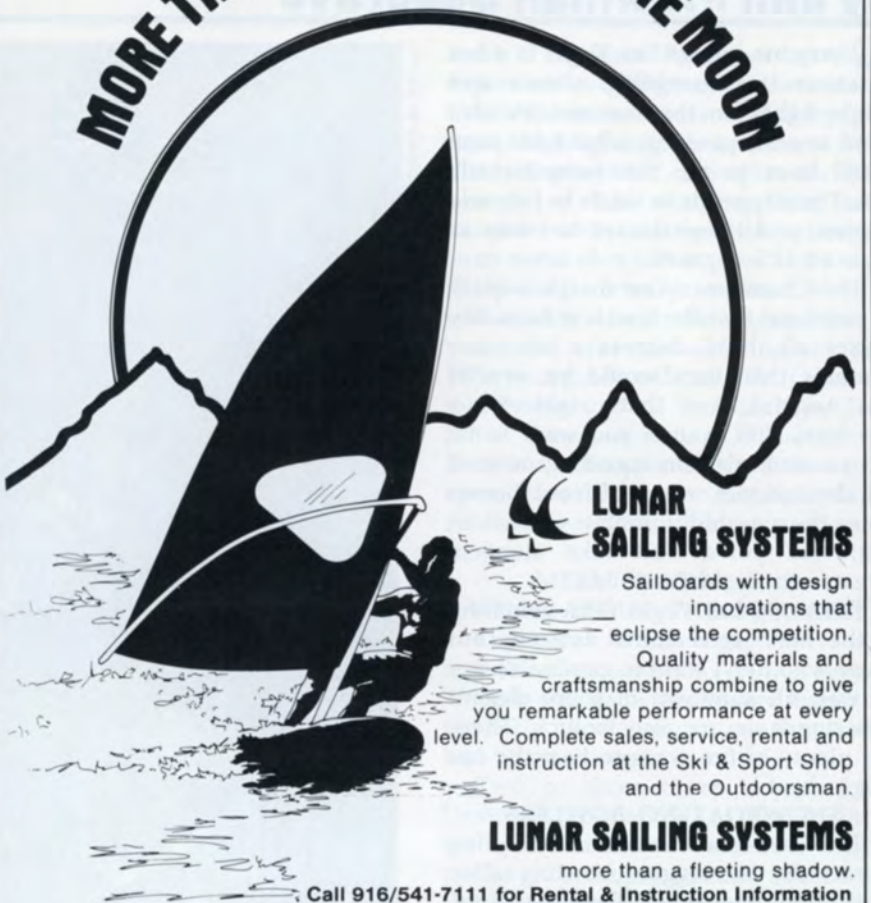
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Mr. Lynn Phipps
Torrance, CA.

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Las Vegas Summer

The Great Indoors



Hot tips on staying cool in Vegas this summer.
By Jan Plowman Seagrave

Everyone knows Las Vegas is a hot town for gambling, shows and bright lights. In the summer it's also good to anticipate just what a hot time you'll have in the Southern Nevada sun. The city tends to sizzle in July and August, and temperatures can soar as high as 115 degrees.

The Chamber of Commerce is quick to point out that the low, low humidity makes all those degrees a lot more bearable than they would be, say, in Los Angeles. And that's right—it's a dry heat. Still, unless you want to be dry-roasted, plan on spending most of the day indoors where it's cool. Sometimes the air conditioning is so cool, in fact, that you'd best take along a sweater to avoid frostbite.

For some Las Vegas fans, gambling is the main recreational interest. But those who don't want to gamble all day or wait till sundown in some elegant watering hole are also in luck. There are plenty of fun ways to beat the Las Vegas heat.

SHOWBOATING BOWLERS

The 106-lane Showboat Bowling Center is the biggest bowling alley west of the Mississippi. Open 24 hours, the sprawling center next to the Showboat Hotel's casino features cocktail service as well as the traditional snack bar. ABC's Wide World of Sports visits



RICHARD MENZIES

If clothes make the man, Liberace is a million-dollar showman. The performer's flashy wardrobe, autos and rare pianos are enshrined in his own museum.



Bring money or just ogle the latest in jet-set fashions from such stores as Neiman-Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue at The Fashion Show on the Strip. It's air-conditioned, of course.

every January when the Professional Bowlers Association winter tour rolls through, and the hotel also hosts the PBA's Doubles Classic every summer. Fees are $1 per game, with junior discounts from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and from 6 a.m. to noon weekends. There's a complete pro shop, and resident professional Jeanette Robinson gives free bowling clinics regularly.

DIAMONDS GALORE

Liberace, a.k.a. "Mr. Showmanship," has assembled memorabilia from his long career in his own museum at 1775 East Tropicana Road. Among the displays are his fabulous classic and customized automobiles, rare pianos including a hand-painted one owned by Chopin and George Gershwin's concert grand, much of his bejeweled and furry wardrobe and famous jewelry collection. The tax-deductible donations of $3.50 adults, $3 seniors and $2 children go into a scholarship fund for talented young performing artists. The museum is open weekdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Liberace's brother George is usually there. He and his wife Dora lead the tours.

WAXY BUILD-UP

You won't get any autographs, but at the Entertainers Hall of Fame you will meet 17 life-sized figures of Las Vegas superstars wearing costumes donated by the stars and surrounded by pictures highlighting their careers. The Elvis display, for example, includes photos of his wedding, his baby daughter and such morbid curiosities as an aerial shot of his grave and a copy of his will. It may be hard to wax enthusiastic about the figures, but if you enjoy this sort of thing, it's fun. (The tour guide will tell you it took six months to get all the hairs in Tom Jones' chest just right.) On the second floor of the Tropicana Hotel, the hall is open from 10 a.m. to midnight daily. Adults are $3.50, children under 12 free.



LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

Ringside or slotside, you can watch trapeze artists daily at Circus Circus.

MERV IS HERE, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SQUARES?

One result of the Vegas-Hollywood entertainment connection is that several TV talk and game shows are taped on the Strip. And you can see the shows live at no charge.

Two or three times a year John Davidson tapes at the Las Vegas Hilton with little advance notice. Free tickets can be picked up a week in advance at the Hilton showroom booth. The dimpled darling's next show is tentatively scheduled for September 28.

Merv Griffin will be taping at 2:15 p.m. daily at the Riviera on July 10-14,

August 10-14 and September 11-15. Free tickets can be picked up at 11 a.m. on each taping day.

The NBC game show Las Vegas Gambit is taped four days a month at the Tropicana Hotel, although there is no set schedule. Tickets are free.

When will the Hollywood Squares return to the Riviera for taping? *Will* the Hollywood Squares return for taping? Stay tuned.

BETTER SHOP AROUND

There are three major shopping centers in Las Vegas offering an extraordinary selection of clothing, gifts, and special merchandise, not to mention excellent air conditioning.

Such posh stores as Neiman-Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Goldwaters (as in Senator Barry), Bullock's and Diamonds have made The Fashion Show a major Las Vegas attraction. Be forewarned: the prices at this new center can be pretty fancy too. Fashion shows are scheduled sporadically. On the corner of the Strip and Spring Mountain Road near the Frontier, the mall has 130 shops and valet parking. Its Promenade of Stars, cement squares with Las Vegas entertainers' signatures and handprints, is an added attraction. The mall is open Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sundays noon to 5 p.m.

The three-year-old, two-level Meadows Mall has 135 shops, including Broadway, Diamonds, J. C. Penney and Sears. A special fast food area includes 16 mini-restaurants, most of them ethnic and including Greek, Chinese, French, Italian, Mexican and Nevada Annie's Chili Parlor. Valet parking, too. Open weekdays 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Take Interstate 15 to the Expressway, north to Decatur and turn left. You can't miss it.



Tickets are free when Merv talks and tapes at the Riviera this summer.



LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

Kids have their own summer camp hotel at the Hilton—and no mosquitos!

Across town you'll find Diamonds, Broadway, J. C. Penney and Sears among the 74 merchants in The Boulevard. This 13-year-old mall also features two movie theaters and valet parking. From the Strip take Spring Mountain Road east to Maryland Parkway. Open weekdays 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays noon to 5 p.m.

MOVIES: YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

When the MGM Grand Hotel reopens this summer, it will once again show classic movies in its plush theater, which has comfortable couches and cocktail service. Admission is $2.50, $1.50 for seniors.

The shape of things to come, Caesars Palace's fabulous futuristic Omnimax theater is a tremendous show for children and adults. The geodesic dome surrounds the audience with movie screen and sound systems. The current feature, "Living Planet," traces the history of Earth. Adults and children are $1. The show runs continuously from 11 a.m. to midnight.

GET STEAMED AND STAY COOL

Somehow people don't mind working up a sweat in air-conditioned comfort. There is a wide variety of "spa" facilities available for sports, steam and stamina tests.

Spring Fever features 20 mirrored private suites, each with its own whirlpool, sauna, shower, bath and lounge area. On the corner of Sahara and the Boulder Highway, the place is open 24 hours. For couples it's $14 an hour. Call 457-5044.

For $15 per day you can have full run of the Las Vegas Sporting House, which has a basketball court, racquetball courts, indoor and outdoor pools and tracks, exercise classes and equipment. It's open 24 hours and located behind the Stardust Hotel at 3025 Industrial Road. Call 733-8999 for reservations.

For racquetball fans there are courts available for rent at Caesars Palace (731-7110), Cambridge Racquetball Club (735-8153), Las Vegas Racquetball Club (733-1919), Supreme Court (873-5660), the Tropicana Hotel (749-2222) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (739-3150).

SWINGING ON THE STRIP

At Circus Circus some of the world's best aerial acrobats and trapeze artists perform every half hour from 11 a.m. until midnight above the gaming action. There are benches for those who want to just sit and watch. The kids can watch from the circus midway on the second floor, where they also can stay amused with carnival games.

SUMMER CAMP WAS NEVER LIKE THIS

Guests of the Las Vegas Hilton and the Flamingo Hilton can leave their children at the former's unique Youth Hotel all day or by the hour. Counselors supervise activities in three areas—pre-school, elementary and teenage. Summer hours are from 8 a.m. to midnight, with a supervised dormitory open every night during the summer.

FIND A COOL GAME

During the summer every casino in town has the air conditioning turned up, and it's a sure way to beat the heat. You can stake out a nickel machine for

(Continued on next page)



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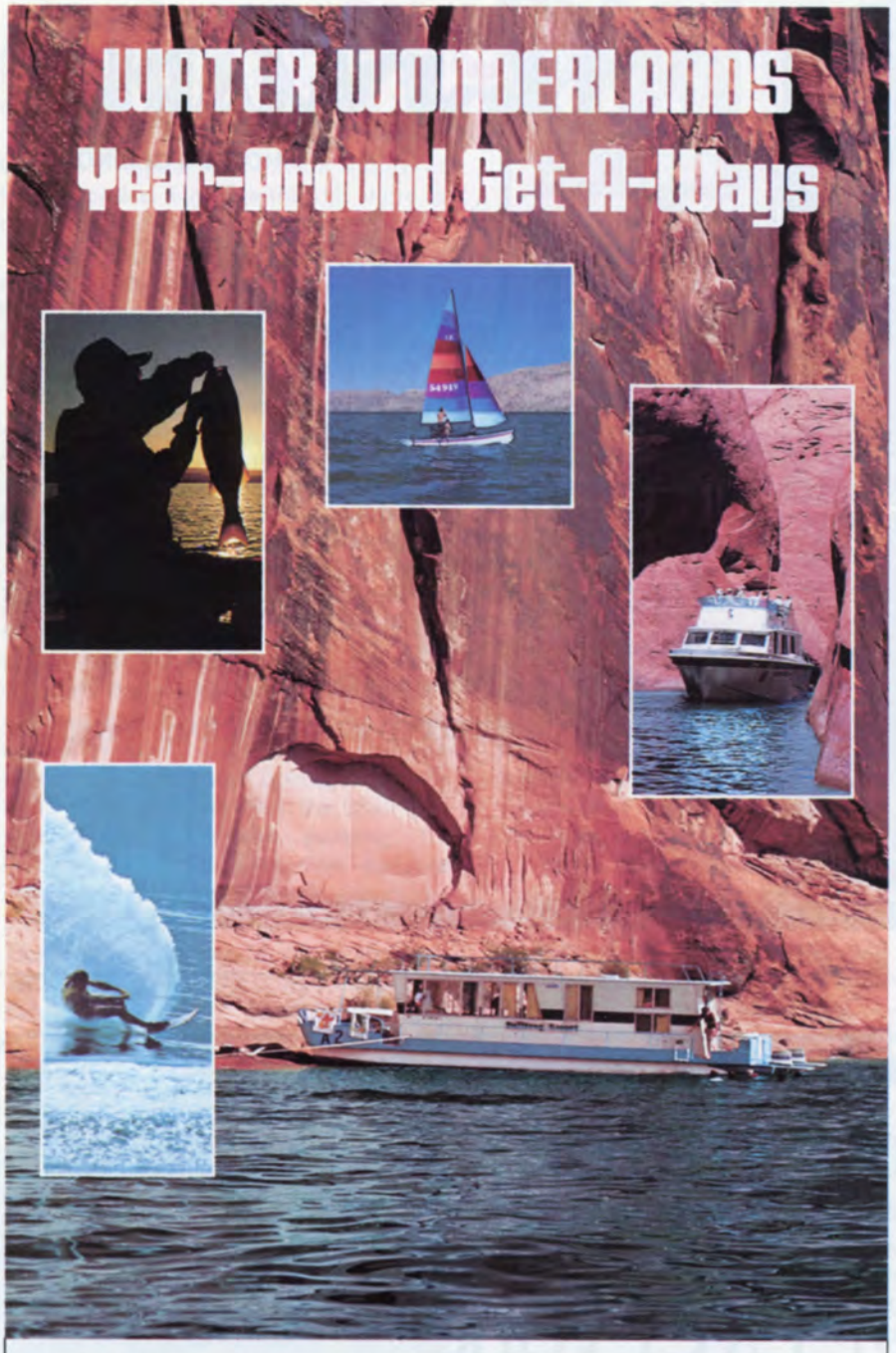
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(Continued from previous page)

several cool, comfortable hours or hit the tables in a big way. Take in the shows, then get a hotel room and order iced drinks from room service. It may be hot outside, but who cares? You'll never have to leave.

"At Las Vegas Downs you can sit among the $2 bettors and yell your lungs out or root more discreetly from the restaurant while dining on steak or lobster."

SCHOOL ON THE HOUSE

Beginning gamblers and even seasoned veterans might benefit from the Tropicana Hotel's free gaming school. At 2 and 4 p.m. every day but Sunday, professional dealers give lessons in blackjack, craps, roulette and baccarat. Just ask the bell captains for directions to the school, which is on the mezzanine level of the Atrium Shopping Plaza. You don't have to register, and there are no tests to worry about; those come later when you're playing for real at the tables.

DOG DAYS IN HENDERSON

Not all the action in Southern Nevada takes place within the sunless, clockless casinos. Many Las Vegans and visitors take the 14-mile drive south to Henderson to wager a farthing or two on the greyhounds at Las Vegas Downs. This handsome new dog track, which opened earlier this year, features a glass-enclosed, temperature-controlled grandstand that eliminates all concern about the thermometer. You can sit among the $2 bettors and yell your lungs out, or root more discreetly from the restaurant section while dining on steak or lobster. Racing takes place nightly except Monday starting at 8 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday matinees begin at 2 p.m. There are no buses to the track—not even a Greyhound—so you'll have to provide your own transportation. But if you're looking for an exotic way to risk your mad money, it's worth it. □

Jan Plowman Seagrave is a freelance writer and former feature editor for the Las Vegas Sun *and the* Valley Times.



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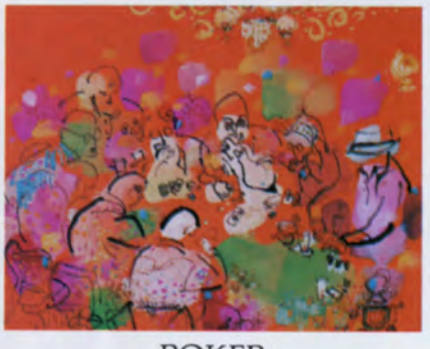




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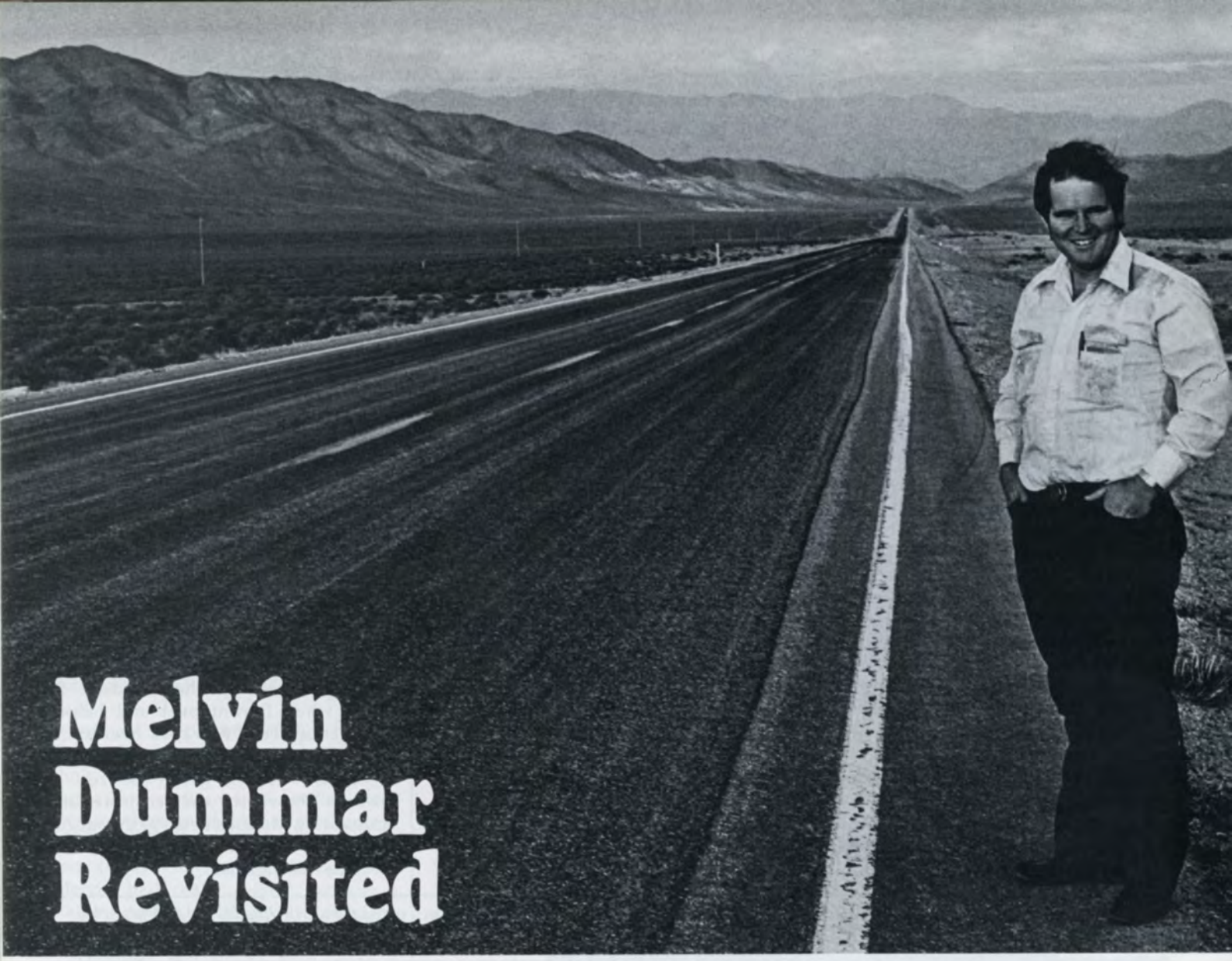
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Melvin Dummar Revisited

The real-life star of 'Melvin and Howard' has inherited more fame than fortune since he picked up a ragged stranger on the highway near Beatty. By Richard Menzies

It's a dark moonless night in central Nevada as we chase our high beams along Highway 50, steel-belted radials turning hapless field mice and suicidal jackrabbits into magpie fodder. The high-intensity halogen spotlight scans the shoulder for range cattle, while the fuzzbuster on the dash monitors the darkness ahead for telltale radar signals. Inside, the passengers snuggle amid a mounting bilge of soft drink cans, potato chip bags, Kentucky fried chicken bones and spent .22 cartridges.

The man behind the wheel is familiar, a dead ringer for the cuddly, endomorphic actor Paul Le Mat, and no wonder. He is the real life Melvin Dummar, former milkman and gas station operator, would-be heir to the Howard Hughes empire, and current American folk hero celebrated in the Oscar-winning film "Melvin and Howard."

> **"Still a member of the working class, he travels Nevada and Northern California as a seafood salesman, and sometimes peddles T-shirts bearing the slogan: 'Even bad wills make rich attorneys.'"**

The movie, according to director Jonathan Demme, is an "imaginative interpretation" of the actual events of Dummar's life. Still, the celluloid version isn't far off the mark.

"For the most part, all those things happened to me at one time in my life or another," Melvin admits. "I didn't like the way they made me appear naive and frivolous, but mostly it's a fun movie.

"I really don't like the advertising campaign that Universal's put out. I don't think that the title, 'Melvin and Howard, an American Love Story,' is very appealing at all. If I wasn't Melvin, if I wasn't familiar with the story, I'd think it had something to do with the gay community. That's a little embarrassing to me."

Embarrassment, notoriety and worldwide publicity seem to have had little effect on the real life Melvin Dummar. He's still an ingenuous, hard-working member of the middle class, the sort of average specimen outer space aliens would be likely to pick for a close encounter of the third kind, or to whom God would appear in the guise of George Burns. And sometimes it doesn't seem so improbable that Howard Hughes would single out Melvin as a logical heir to his fortune.

As it turned out, however, Melvin inherited more fame than fortune. Still a member of the working class, he spends most of his time these days traveling Nevada and northern California as a salesman for Trans Alaska Seafoods. On the side, he sells boxes of a synthetic milk substitute and sometimes peddles T-shirts bearing the slogan: "Even bad wills make rich attorneys." At home in Ogden, Utah, his wife Bonnie helps pay the bills by selling homemade brownies at flea markets. For rest and relaxation, the pair enjoy camping and cruising the highways and byways of the Great Basin.

"I guess I've driven every paved road there is in Nevada," says Melvin, who grew up on the outskirts of Fallon and is intimate with most every geographical feature of Nye and Churchill counties. Off to the right he points out Sand Mountain, where as a boy he went sledding on an old automobile hood; to the left is the ghost town of Fairview, where his prospector father made and lost a fortune in gold, and where his sister Mary Ellen was killed in a fall down a mine shaft.

"We were talking about the aircraft industry when he told me he was familiar with Hughes Aircraft because he owned it. Up until then I thought he was just a wino."



Melvin never cared much for mining, but prospecting and rock hounding are in his blood. He's also the sort of guy who can't resist stopping to inspect cardboard boxes lying beside the road, and as he drives, one eye is always trained on the shoulder for bits of jetsam blown from passing trucks. Over the years the roadside has rewarded him with tools, cash, clothing, a broken lot of stuffed teddy bears. But the biggest find ever was the time outside Beatty when he happened upon the prone figure of recluse billionaire Howard Hughes.

"I think it was either on the 29th or the 30th of December, 1967," Dummar recalls. "He was lying about a hundred yards off the main highway on sort of a dirt road. Looked like, appeared to me like somebody'd dumped him out there. When I first seen him with my headlights I thought he was dead. So that's when I went over and helped him get up. Took him back over to the car and put him in."

As the saying goes, the rest is history. Thawed by the car heater and aroused by Melvin's singing, the ragged stranger regained consciousness and became conversant.

When Melvin Dummar lived near Fallon as a boy he used to ride down Sand Mountain on automobile hoods. He and his wife Bonnie stopped at the great dune off U.S. 50 on a recent drive through the state and found the wind was up as usual.



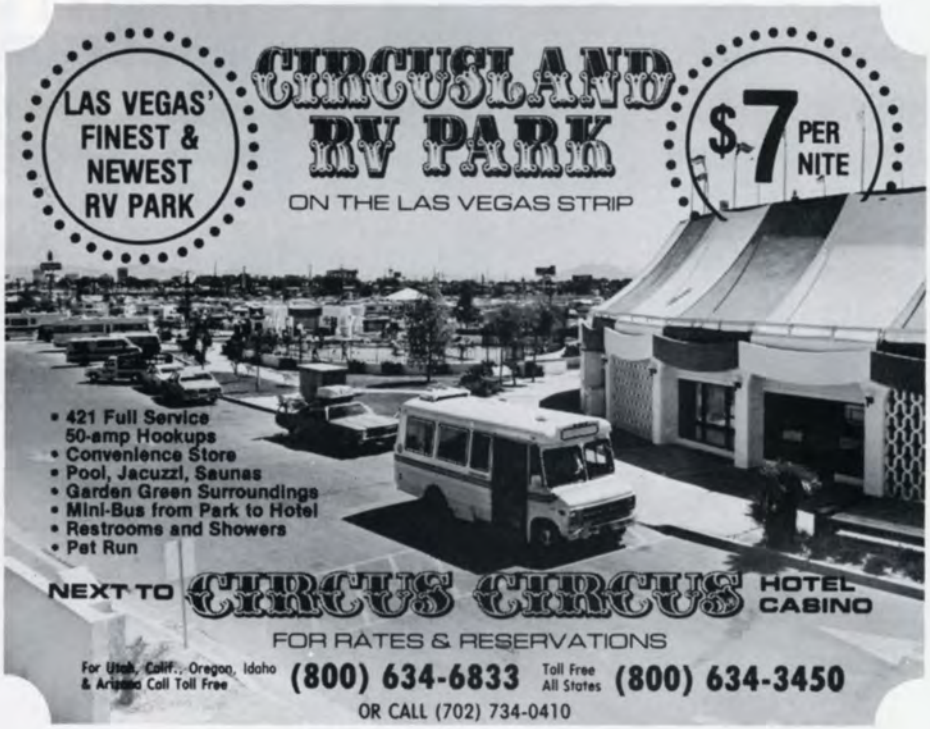
"We were talking about different things I was doing, where I was working. And I think we were talking about the aircraft industry, because I'd been in the Air Force and I was trying to get a job in one of the aircraft plants. And that's when he told me he was familiar with Hughes Aircraft because he owned it. Up until then I thought he was just a wino. In fact, I still thought he was a wino after that. I thought, 'Wow, this guy's really squirrelly. He's been out here a little too long.' "

After dropping his strange passenger off at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, Melvin says he didn't give the incident much thought—that is, not until April, 1976, when he learned he'd been named beneficiary of one-sixteenth of the late billionaire's estate. The love story of Melvin and Howard blossomed, only to end in divorce after a seven-month trial that judged the so-called Mormon will a fake. Instead of being a hundred and fifty million or so in the black, Melvin found himself broke, discredited and thousands of dollars in debt.

Almost all of the $80,000 he and Bonnie were paid for film rights to their story went to pay leftover legal fees. Their contract also entitles them to three percent of the net profits from the film—money that still seems as remote as Howard's millions. What Melvin had really hoped for was a starring role in his life story; instead, he had to settle for a bit part as a waiter.

Dummar still thinks he'd make a good actor or perhaps a television game show emcee, just as he once almost made a career of being a contestant. He also has singing ambitions, and when not busy selling fish, headlines with a country-rock group called Melvin and Revival. In fact, he carries a demo tape in his car, ready to play at the drop of a hint. His favorites are songs he's composed himself, homespun ballads such as "All American Dreamer" and "Thank You Howard." And, of course, there's the now infamous "Santa's Souped Up Sleigh." Backed by a good band and professionally recorded, it's really not bad at all. Included with his first album, he says, will be a free facsimile of the original Hughes will.

Though they're still amazed to see their names in lights and sometimes grow wistful at the sight of big yellow jetliners, Melvin and Bonnie Dummar remain remarkably unchanged by the whole affair. Basically they're ordinary



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people caught up in a workaday world of jobs, bills, house payments and recalcitrant children. The fan mail and crank calls have slowed to a trickle; TV comedians have mercifully exhausted their repertoire of fingerprint jokes. Melvin once wondered if the movie might do for Gabbs what "Urban Cowboy" did for Gillies' bar, but so far there's been no pilgrimmage of would-be Melvin Dummars to Basic Industries.

"I've met the Hollywood stars and I'm not that impressed," Melvin says. "It hasn't changed the way I live. I'm still doing the same things I would have."

"I think it was kinda neat that he left me in his will and remembered me. I only wish he had handled it differently."



Asked if his celebrated "love affair" with Howard Hughes has cooled, the genial samaritan of Highway 95 laughs.

"Well, you know, I think it was kinda neat that he left me in his will and everything and remembered me. But I only wish that he'd have handled it differently and had filed in court himself, or had his attorneys do it or had it notarized or whatever they do to 'em, so everything wouldn't be falling on me. And accusing me and my whole family, friends, neighbors and everybody else of having some big plot or scheme going. That's what really hurt."

If he had it all to do over again, Melvin says he wouldn't hesitate to pick up anyone in distress. But as far as the last will and testament goes, he'd definitely handle it differently if he had another chance. For one thing, he wouldn't handle it at all. □

Richard Menzies is a Salt Lake City-based writer who was picked up by Melvin Dummar while hitchhiking on assignment for Nevada Magazine.

Underworld Fantasyland

In Eastern Nevada, the colorful caverns discovered by Absalom Lehman continue to change with each drip of water.

Lehman Caves, the great underground cave network of Eastern Nevada, is still alive and dripping after all these centuries. At a pace that defies detection, water continues to shape its exotic marble sculptures.

Nature's artistic process began 600 million years ago when an ocean covered the region. Limey remains of sea organisms settled on the bottom, and later sediments compressed the deposits into limestone. The sea bottom rose, and about 70 million years ago



C.J. HADLEY

the region was folded and wrinkled upward. About 50 million years later Wheeler Peak was formed. Nearby volcanic activity changed the limestone into low-grade marble and fractured the ancient beds.

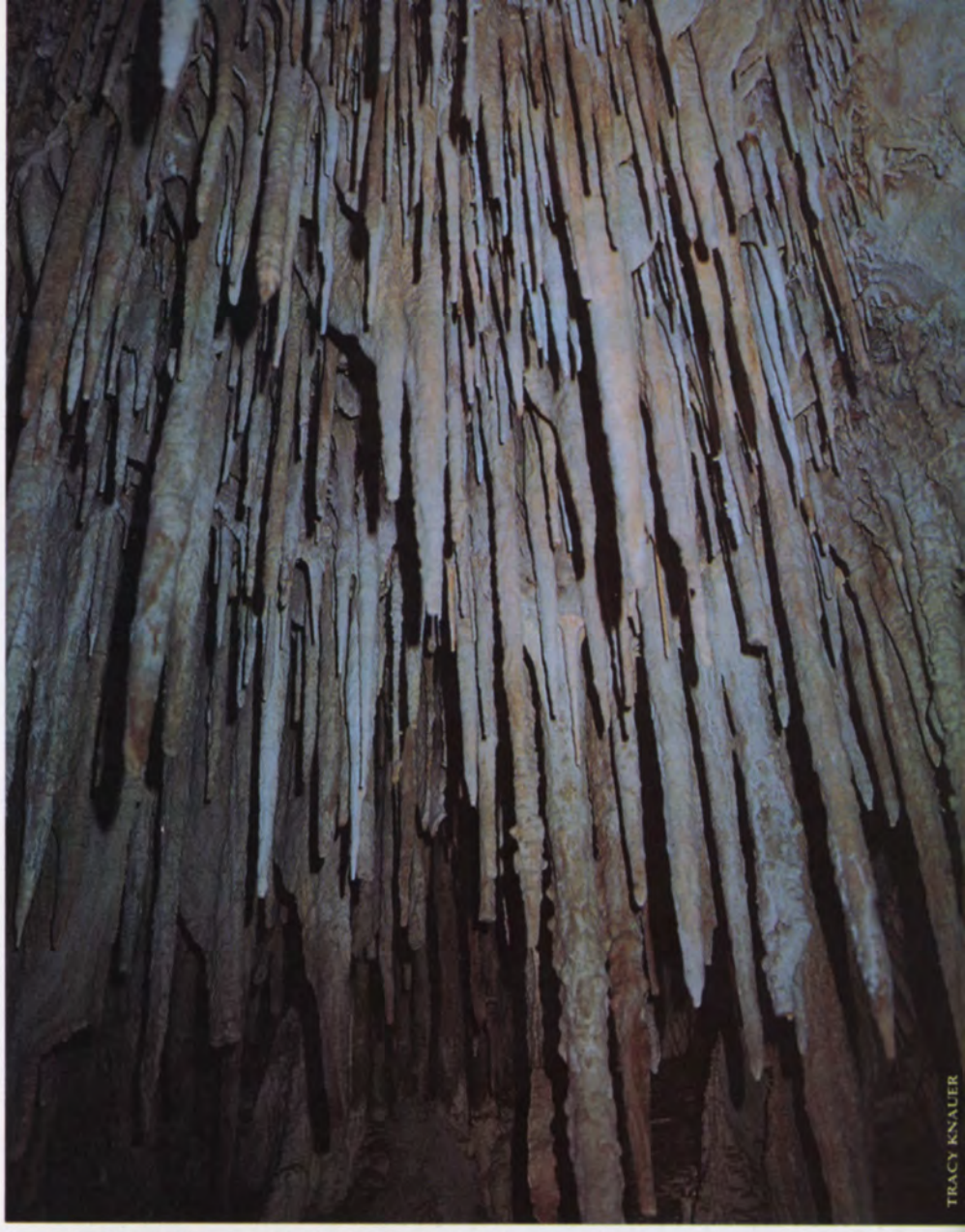
Then acidic ground water went to work, opening cavities in the marble. After the water level dropped below the caves, which are now at 7,000-foot elevation, the water continued to dissolve and shape the rock. Today we can see the result, a marvelous otherworldly scene right out of Jules Verne.

Prehistoric Nevadans used the cave entrance as a burial site about 1100 A.D., but there is no evidence they explored inside. Indeed, the official "discovery" of the caves was not made until 1885, when newspapers announced that local rancher and miner Absalom Lehman had found some unique caverns below Wheeler Peak. Amazingly, Lehman explored 80 percent of the cave, and he frequently gave guided tours of his find until his death in 1891.

Lehman Caves became a national monument in 1922, and in time rickety ladders and candlelight were replaced by modern footpaths and electric lighting. Today nearly 40,000 people annually take the .6-mile tour into the caves.

Lehman Caves and its visitor center are located 67 miles east of Ely near the town of Baker. Summer tours, which last up to two hours, are scheduled on the hour from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. From Labor Day to Memorial Day there are five tours a day between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. It's also possible to arrange spelunking, or cave crawling, tours of the monument.—*Edward E. Wood Jr.*

Edward E. Wood Jr. is Chief Interpreter at Lehman Caves National Monument.


TRACY KNAUER


TRACY KNAUER


C.J. HADLEY

The ceiling's stalactites have been created by calcite-laden water whose drips also build stalagmites on the floor. On some walls thin films of water have left draperies of calcium carbonate. It's cool in the caves—about 50 degrees—so take a sweater for tours. There's also fine fishing and camping in the Wheeler Peak area.



C.J. HADLEY



C.J. HADLEY



TRACY KNAUER



DAVID MUENCH

Basin & Range

By John McPhee

Basin and Range, *John McPhee's latest book and from which this chapter is excerpted, is in its author's words, the consequence of "trying to develop at least a rudimentary understanding of the long history and odd behavior of the planetary surface where our kind has made its sudden and alarming appearance." The first two sentences of* Basin and Range *define McPhee's brief: "The poles of the earth have wandered. The equator has apparently moved." How did this come to be?*

McPhee's course of discovery took him first to Kenneth Deffeyes ("His surname rhymes with 'the maze' "), professor of geology at Princeton. McPhee joined Deffeyes on a trip to Nevada. "The earth is splitting apart there, quite possibly opening a seaway. It is not something that happened a couple of hundred years ago. It only began in the Miocene [5 to 22.5 million years ago] and is going on today If you want to see happening right now what happened here [in New Jersey] two hundred million years ago, you can see it all in Nevada."

With Deffeyes, McPhee charts the shifts of basin and range as he would human passages; it is a story of the earth come alive. Geologist and writer see growth and change in highway cuts, in paleomagnetic samples, in abandoned silver workings, from Carlin to Winnemucca—across and up and down the state.

As he finally comes to western Nevada, McPhee sums up the consequences of his discoveries, and then, in a seamless shift of technique, he goes out into the community to hear the reactions of everyday Nevadans to the surprising story of what is to become of their state.—Ed.

From Basin and Range *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux)* © *1980 John McPhee. Originally in* The New Yorker.

Twenty miles out of Winnemucca, and the interstate is dropping south toward the Humboldt Range. A coyote runs along beside the road. It is out of its element, tongue out, outclassed, under minimum speed. Deffeyes says that most ranges in the Basin and Range had one or two silver deposits in them, if any, but the Humboldts had five. We have also entered the bottomlands of the former Lake Lahontan. The hot-springs map shows more activity in this part of the province. Extension of the earth's crust has been somewhat more pronounced here, Deffeyes explains, and hence there are more ore deposits. He feels that when a seaway opens up, the spreading center will be somewhere nearby. Or possibly back in Utah, in the bed of Lake Bonneville. "But this one has better connections."

"Connections?"

"Death Valley. Walker Lake. Carson Sink." An Exxon map of the western United States is spread open on the seat between us. He runs his finger from Death Valley to Carson Sink and on northward to cross the interstate at Lovelock. "The ocean will open here," he repeats. "Or in the Bonneville basin. I think here."

A few miles off the road is the site of a planned community dating from the nineteen-sixties. It was to have wide streets and a fountained square, but construction was delayed and then indefinitely postponed. Ghostless ghost town, it had been named Neptune City.

With the river on our right, we round the nose of the Humboldt Range, as did the Donner Party and roughly a hundred and sixty-five thousand other people, in a seventeen-year period, heading in their wagons toward Humboldt Sink, Carson Sink, and the terror of days without water. But first, as we do now, they came into broad green flats abundantly fertile with grass, knee-high grass, a fill for the oxen, the last gesture of the river before it vanished into the air. The emigrants called this place the Big Meadows of the Humboldt, and something like two hundred and fifty wagons would be resting here at any given time.

"There was a sea here in the Triassic," Deffeyes remarks. "At least until the Sonomia terrain came in and sutured on. The sea was full of pelagic squid, and was not abyssal, but it was deep enough so the bottom received no sunlight, and bottom life was not dominant."

"How do you know it was not dominant?"

"Because I have looked at the siltstones and the ammonites in them, and that is what I see there."

Visions of oceans before and behind us in time, we roll on into Lovelock. SLOW—DUST HAZARD. Lovelock, Nevada 89419. There are cumulus snow clouds overhead and big bays of blue in the cold sky, with snow coming down in curtains over in the Trinity Range, snow pluming upward over the valley like smoke from a runaway fire.

It'll be a change to have water here instead of desert. By God, we could use it.

Lovelock was a station of the Overland Stage. It became known throughout Nevada as "a good town with a bad water supply." An editor of the Lovelock *Review-Miner* wrote in 1915, "There is little use in trying to induce people to locate here until the water question is settled. Maybe the water does not kill anyone, but it certainly drives people away." In 1917, Lovelock was incorporated as a third-class city, and one of its first acts was to enforce a ban on houses of prostitution within twelve hundred feet of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Another was a curfew. Another ordered all city lights turned off when there was enough moon.

JAX CASINO LIBERAL SLOTS

TWO STIFFS SELLING GAS AND MOTEL

WATER SUPPLY FROM PRIVATE WELL

LOVELOCK SEED COMPANY GRAINS AND FEED

Here in the Big Meadows of the Humboldt, the principal employer is the co-op seed mill on the edge of town, which sends alfalfa all over the world.

On the sidewalks are men in Stetsons, men in three-piece suits, men in windbreakers, tall gaunt overalled men with beards. There are women in Stetsons, boots, and jeans. A thin young man climbs out of a pickup that is painted in glossy swirls of yellow and purple, and has a roll bar, balloon tires, headphones, and seventeen lights.

There are terraces of Lake Lahontan above the ballfield of the Lovelock Mustangs. Cattle graze beside the field. The Ten Commandments are carved in a large piece of metamorphosed granite outside the county courthouse.

NO. 10:
THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE, NOR HIS MANSERVANT, NOR HIS MAIDSERVANT, NOR HIS CATTLE

BRAZEN ONAGER–BAR–BUD–PIZZA

WHOO-O-A MOTEL

"Lovelock was a person's name," Deffeyes cautions.

LOVELOCK MERCANTILE

The name is fading on the cornice of Lovelock Mercantile. It was built in 1905, expanded in 1907, is the bus stop now, liquor store, clothing store, grocery store, real-estate office, bakery, Western Union office—all in one room. There is a sign on one of the columns that hold up the room:

WE CANNOT ACCEPT GOVERNMENT MEAL TICKETS

Across the valley is a huge whitewash "L" on a rock above the fault scar of the Humboldt Range.

We go into Sturgeon's Log Cabin restaurant and sit down for coffee against a backdrop of rolling cherries, watermelons, and bells. A mountain lion in a glass case. Six feet to the tip of the tail. Shot by Daniel (Bill) Milich, in the Tobin Range.

I hand Deffeyes the Exxon map and ask him to sketch in for me the opening of the new seaway, the spreading center as he sees it coming. "Of course, all the valleys in the Great Basin are to a greater or lesser extent competing," he says. "But I'd put it where I said—right here." With a pencil he begins to rough in a double line, a swath, about fifteen miles wide. He sketches through the axis of Death Valley and up into Nevada, and then north by northwest through Basalt and Coaldale before bending due north through Walker Lake, Fallon, and Lovelock. "The spreading center would connect with a transform fault coming in from Cape Mendocino," he adds, and he sketches such a line from the California coast to a point a little north of Lovelock. He is sketching the creation of a crustal plate, and he seems confident of that edge, for the Mendocino transform fault—the Mendocino trend—is in place now, ready to go. He is less certain about the southern edge of the new plate, because he has two choices. The Garlock Fault runs east-west just above Los Angeles, and that could become a side of the new plate; or the spreading center could continue south through the Mojave Desert and the Salton Sea to meet the Pacific Plate in the Gulf of California. "The Mojave sits in there with discontinued basin-and-range faulting," Deffeyes says, almost to himself, a substitute for whistling, as he sketches in the alternative lines. "There has to be a transform fault at the south end of the live, expanding rift. The sea has got to get through somewhere."

Now he places his hands on the map so that they frame the Garlock and Mendocino faults and hold between them a large piece of California—from Bakersfield to Redding, roughly, and including San Francisco, Sacramento, and Fresno—not to mention the whole of the High Sierra, Reno, and ten million acres of Nevada. "You create a California Plate," he says. "And the only question is: Is it this size, or the larger one? How much goes out to sea?" British Columbia is to his left and Mexico is to his right, beside his coffee cup on the oak Formica. The coast is against his belly. He moves his hands as if to pull all of central California out to sea. "Does this much go?" he says "Or do the Mojave and Baja go with it?" A train of flatcars pounds through town carrying aircraft engines.

My mind has drifted outside the building. I am wondering what these people in this dry basin—a mile above sea level—would think if they knew what Deffeyes was doing, if they were confronted with the news that an ocean may open in their town. I will soon find out.

"What?"

"Are you stoned?"

"The way I see it, I won't be here, so the hell with it."

"It's a little doubtful. It could be, but it's a little doubtful."

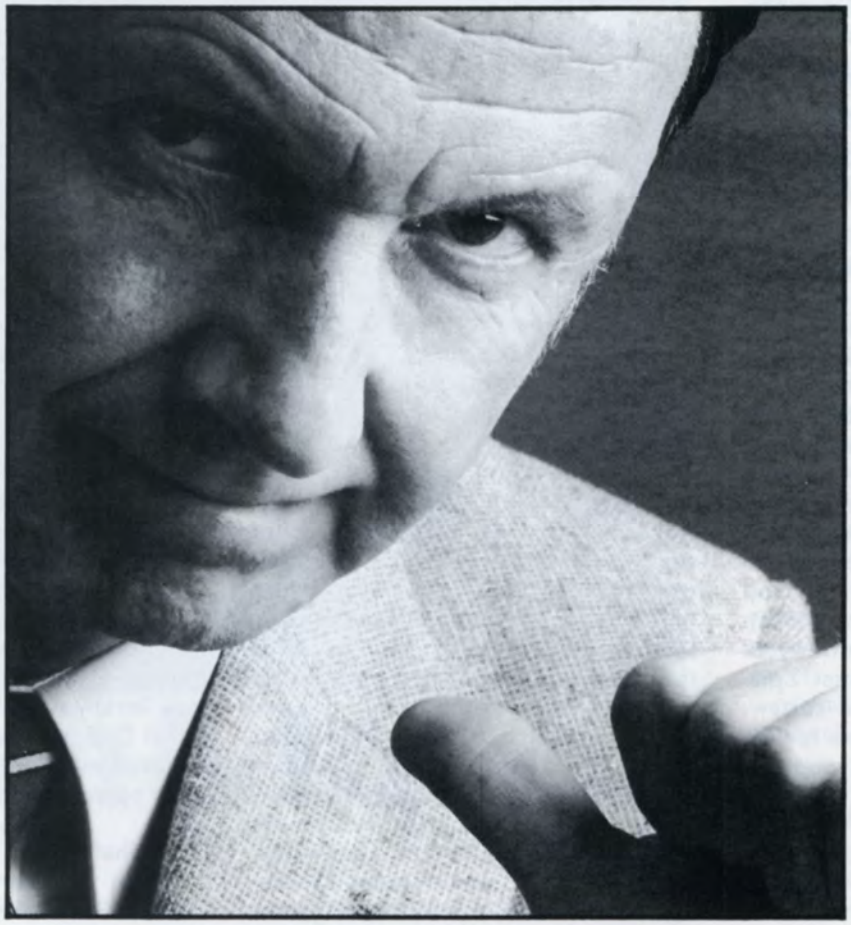
"If it happens real quick, I guess a couple of people will die, but if it's like most other things they'll find out about it hundreds of years before and move people out of here. The whole world will probably go to hell before that happens anyway."

"You mean salt water, crests, troughs, big splash, and all that? Don't sweat it. You're safe here—as long as Pluto's out there."

"We got a boat."

"That's the best news I've heard in a couple of years. When I go bye-bye to the place below, why, that water will be there to cool me. I hope it's Saturday night. I won't have to take an extra bath." *(Continued on next page)*

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"It may be a good thing, there's so many politicians; but they may get an extra boat. I used to be a miner. Oh, I've been all over. But now they've got machines and all the miners have died."

"The entire history of Nevada is one of plant life, animal life, and human life adapting to very difficult conditions. People here are the most individualistic you can find. As district attorney, I see examples of it every day. They want to live free from government interference. They don't fit into a structured way of life. This area was settled by people who shun progress. Their way of life would be totally unattractive to most, but they chose it. They have chosen conditions that would be considered intolerable elsewhere. So they would adapt, easily, to the strangest of situations."

"I've been here thirty-three years, almost half of that as mayor. I can't quite imagine the sea coming in—although most of us know that this was all under water at one time. I know there's quite a fault that runs to the east of us here. It may not be active. But it leaves a mark on your mind."

"Everybody's entitled to an opinion. Everybody's entitled to ask a question. If I didn't think your question was valid, I wouldn't have to answer you. I'd hope the fishing was good. I wouldn't mind having some beachfront property. If it was absolutely certified that it was going to happen, we should take steps to keep people out of the area. But as chief of police I'm not going to be alarmed."

"It'll be a change to have water here instead of desert. By God, we could use it. I say that as fire chief. We get seventy fire calls a year, which ain't much, but then we have to go a hundred miles to put out those damned ranch fires. We can't save much, but we can at least put out the heat. I got a ten-thousand-gallon tank there, which is really something for a place with no water. I guess I won't still be here to see the ocean come, and I'm glad of it, because I can't swim."

Meanwhile, Deffeyes, in Sturgeon's Log Cabin, applies the last refining strokes to his sketchings on the map. "The Salton Sea and Death Valley are below sea level now, and the ocean would be there if it were not for pieces of this and that between," he says. "We are extending the continental crust here. It is exactly analogous to the East African Rift, the Red Sea, the Atlantic. California will be an island. It is just a matter of time." □

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Modern-Day Merlin

The Boy Magician meets Terror Train. By Ann Henderson

In the old days a magician traveled light—a rabbit, top hat, bag of tricks and a sexy looking lady who was sawed in half every night. Today, illusionist David Copperfield crams four 18-wheelers with two million dollars' worth of gadgets and props. And the lone assistant of yesteryear has become a cast of 13 dancers and technicians.

Copperfield, whose penetrating eyes make him look like a sorcerer, realized early that audiences appreciate magic. But he also knew its popularity would grow if the packaging was fancier.

"Magic brings out the child in all of us," he says. "It allows you to get excited about things you don't quite understand."

The 24-year-old Copperfield has made the most of the magician's mystique. Last year he was the youngest entertainer ever to receive the Magician of the Year award (magic's Oscar) from the Academy of Magical Arts. And his increasingly complicated stunts and three highly-rated specials for CBS television (one of which was nominated for an Emmy) have meant larger audiences and new status for the art of deception.

The illusionist's heroes are Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, veterans of dance, rather than legends of magic. Because of this Copperfield's show is a series of vignettes, most with romantic story lines, that combine dance, mime, comedy, music and magic.

In one ballet sequence Copperfield plays the jewel thief from Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief," and diamonds disappear with extraordinary ease. Then in a comedy sketch, as Burt Sparks, host of the TV game show "Let's Burn a Deal," he borrows a $20 bill from a member of the audience. The showgoer must watch the money burn, only to get the same bill back—in perfect shape—at the end of the skit.



Penetrating eyes give illusionist David Copperfield the air of an elegant sorcerer. He makes his first Las Vegas appearance as a headliner July 7-20 at the Las Vegas Hilton.

His show is choreographed, stylized and slick.

Onstage Copperfield is elegant. Backstage at Caesars Tahoe, where he appeared for nine weeks this year, he is fidgity and tense.

"I don't relax very much," he says. "I'm very energetic when it comes to my work. To come up with new material every year is very difficult. Creating new illusions is not where it stops for me because I design all the props, select all the music and write the story lines."

And complicated illusions take time. In his next television special he will make a Lear jet disappear—an illusion Copperfield has been working on for eight years. "Next year Cleveland," he jokes.

Copperfield has known his working future since grade school days when he handed out cards advertising himself as "Davino—The Boy Magician." He later changed his last name from Kotkin to Copperfield, a name he says he pulled out of the hat.

"I'm going to be an actor, a film director, and magic allows me to experiment in those areas," he says. "Gene Kelly will always be thought of as a dancer, yet he acts without dancing and he directs film."

Copperfield's own acting debut was in "Terror Train," part of the wave of scare movies released in 1980. He stars as a magician hired to entertain a group of college students aboard a chartered train. The students are being stalked by a deranged killer, and Copperfield is a prime suspect.

While it's rare for a Copperfield illusion to fail, at his Tahoe appearance a hitch did take place. It happened during his finale, in which he covers a $50,000 Ferrari with a shroud and levitates it about 18 feet above the stage; as the 2,700-pound car rises, Copperfield stands underneath.

"It only got up about three feet and it just fell," says Copperfield. "It wasn't through any fault of mine; it just didn't work. The axle of the car got a little bent, but there was no danger 'cause I hadn't yet moved underneath.

"I'll tell you one thing without giving away any secrets," he says seriously. "They told me there were UFO's over the hotel." □



Magical Jams

"There's a great camaraderie in magic," says David Copperfield. "You can go anywhere in the world and the magician who's there will treat you very well."

When Copperfield appears this summer at the Las Vegas Hilton, he will find a large community of magicians—from beginners to pros—who meet for after-hours magical jam sessions to try out new ideas and talk shop. Copperfield is welcome to join the sessions, and so are you.

If it's Wednesday in Las Vegas, you're fortunate: The Fabulous Magic Shop club meets from 4 to 7 p.m. at 3319 East Charleston Boulevard. Members include magicians of all ages; most are beginners. Then the Darwinian Society meets at midnight—sessions sometimes last until dawn—in the Colonial House on the Strip. (The late hours are convenient for working magicians.) The two clubs, which were founded by magician and writer Gary Darwin, have about 100 members, and 30 to 40 show up every Wednesday.

In Reno, Merlin's Magic Club meets at 2 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month at Washoe Medical Center. Members range from beginners to pros.

For would-be magicians the University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers two magic courses taught by math professors Alan Ackerman and Louis Simonoff. In Northern Nevada, television executive Durward Yasmer teaches a similar course at the Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.

HARD ACTS TO FOLLOW

Magic is one of the most difficult ways to make a living. The performer has to be a whole lot better than good to be steadily employed; he or she must be extraordinary. Following are magicians currently appearing in Las Vegas:

Joel Breen, Balloons Restaurant and Lounge, 3342 South Highland, on Friday and Saturday nights. Performs stage show at 9:30 p.m., then close-up at your table between band sets.

Carlton and Company, Flamingo Hilton. Featured magicians in "Razzle Dazzle."

Daniel Cros, Desert Inn, 7-11 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Charming Frenchman who has been practicing magic in the Monte Carlo Room bar for 16 years.

Jimmy Grippo, Caesars Palace gourmet restaurants. This resident magician has performed sleight-of-hand for kings and presidents and will do the same for you, at your table, upon request.

Jac Hayden, The Treasury. Performs comedy routine in the "Horsin' Around" revue.

Doug Henning, Las Vegas Hilton. Headlining through July 6 and August 3-17

Bob and Nicki Kenny, Maxim Hotel. Comedy illusions featured in "Old Tyme Burlesque."

Gary Norsigian, Play It Again Sam, 9-11 p.m., and Chateau Vegas, 11 p.m.-3 a.m. Close-up magic at your table upon request.

Johnny Paul, Showboat. Resident magician and casino entertainment director will perform sleight-of-hand at your table.

Siegfried & Roy, Stardust Hotel. The stars of "Lido de Paris" and television specials can make an elephant disappear.

Michael Skinner, Golden Nugget, 7-11 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Extraordinary magic at your table as you dine in the Lillie Langtry Restaurant.

Dusty Summers, Jolley Trolley. Lady magician who works with doves and feather bouquets. —*Joyce Rogers Rooker*

★ Las Vegas

ALADDIN, 736-0111: Lola Falana, thru 7/8; Ronnie Milsap, 7/9-22; Lola Falana, 7/23-8/5; Donny & Marie Osmond, 8/6-19; Lou Rawls, Stephanie Mills, 8/20-26; Wayne Newton, Dave Barry, 8/27-10/7

BARBARY COAST, 737-7111: Royal Dixie Jazz Band, indf.

CAESARS PALACE, 731-7333: Cher, thru 7/1; Willie Nelson, 7/2-15; Paul Anka, 7/16-29; Sammy Davis Jr., 7/30-8/12; Tom Jones, 8/13-?6; Cher, 8/27-9/2

CIRCUS CIRCUS, 734-0410: Round the World Circus Acts, 11am-midnight, free

DESERT INN, 733-4444: "Annie," Broadway musical, indf.

DUNES, 737-4110: Casino de Paris. Dinner show 7:45pm, from $15; cocktail show 11:45pm, $14 includes 3 drinks

FLAMINGO HILTON, 733-3111: Razzle Dazzle. Dinner show 8pm, from $14.50; cocktail show midnight, $10 includes 2 drinks

FOUR QUEENS, 385-4011: Nightly entertainment

FRONTIER, 734-0110: Kris Kristofferson, Billy Swan, thru 7/8; Rich Little, 7/9-29; Roy Clark, 7/30-8/19; Shecky Greene, 8/20-9/2

HACIENDA, 739-8911: Nightly entertainment

HOLIDAY CASINO, 732-2411: Wild World of Burlesque. 10pm & 12:30am, Mon.-Fri.; 8pm,



The Broadway musical "Annie" continues its Desert Inn engagement in July and August.

10pm & 12:30am Sat.; dark Sun.; $6.95 includes 2 drinks

IMPERIAL PALACE, 731-3311: Bravo Vegas, indf. 9pm & midnight, from $8 includes 2 drinks

LANDMARK, 733-1110: Continuous entertainment.

LAS VEGAS HILTON, 732-5111: Tony Orlando, Doug Henning, thru 7/6; Bill Cosby, David Copperfield, 7/7-20; John Davidson, 7/21-8/2; Neil Sedaka, Doug Henning, 8/3-17; Tony Orlando, Juliet Prowse, 8/18-31

LAS VEGAS INN & CASINO, 731-3222: Entertainment Tues.-Sun.

MGM GRAND HOTEL, 739-4567: *Ziegfeld Room:* Jubilee!, 8pm & midnight; *Celebrity Room:* Dean Martin 8pm, Mac Davis midnight, 7/30-8/5; Mac Davis, 8/6-11; Rich Little, Debbie Reynolds, 8/12-9/2

MARINA, 739-1500: Cork Proctor, indf.

MAXIM, 731-4300: Old Tyme Burlesque. 8pm, 10:15pm, 12:30am, $9.50 includes 2 drinks

RIVIERA, 734-5110: Dolly Parton thru 7/1; Melissa Manchester, 7/9-15; Dolly Parton, 7/16-22; Shirley MacLaine, 7/23-8/5; Loretta Lynn, 8/6-19; Diana Ross, 8/20-29; Buddy Hackett, James Darren, 8/30-9/3

ROYAL AMERICANA, 734-0711: Dondino, indf.

ROYAL HOTEL CASINO, 733-4000: Burlesque Burlesque, indf.

SAHARA, 735-4242: "Madame Goes to Harlem," with Wayland Flowers, thru 7/1; Charo, Jack Jones, 8pm, Flip Wilson, midnight, 7/2-22; Don Rickles, Sandler & Young, 7/23-8/5; Johnny Carson, Sahara Girls, 8/21-23; Jerry Lewis, Vic Damone, 8/24-9/2

SAM'S TOWN, 456-7777: 24-hour entertainment

SANDS, 733-5000: Shecky Greene, Dottie West, thru 7/7; Alan King, 7/8-14; Glen Campbell, 7/15-21; Shecky Greene, Tammy Wynette, 7/22-8/4

SILVERBIRD, 735-4111: The McCall Twins, thru 7/4; Pete Willcox, 7/20-8/29; The Muglestons, 8/31-9/19

SILVER SLIPPER, 734-1212: Boy-Lesque, indf.

STARDUST, 732-6325: Lido de Paris 81

TROPICANA, 739-2411: Folies-Bergere 81. Dinner show 8pm from $21; cocktail show midnight, from $15

UNION PLAZA, 386-2444: Broadway plays 8pm & 11:45pm nightly except Mon.; Mickey Finn Show 2pm & 4pm daily except Sun.

★ Lake Tahoe

CAESARS TAHOE, 588-3515: Nightly entertainment

CLOUD'S CAL-NEVA HOTEL, 832-4000: Jack Ross Show, thru 7/5; The Coasters, 7/6-19; The Drifters, 7/21-8/2; The Spiral Starecase, 8/4-16; Frankie Fanelli, 8/18-9/6

CRYSTAL BAY CLUB, 831-0512: Tony Austin Trio, 7/1-19; Midnight Magic, 7/21-8/2; Perfect Circle, 8/4-16; Me, Mike & Mitch, 8/17-30

HARRAH'S LAKE TAHOE, 588-6606: Dionne Warwick, Billy Crystal, thru 7/2; Helen Reddy, Jim Stafford, 7/3-9; Sammy Davis Jr., 7/10-23; Bob Newhart, Dottie West, 7/24-8/6; Don Rickles, Peaches & Herb, 8/7-13; Wayne Newton, 8/14-26; Leo Sayer, 8/27; Melissa Manchester, 8/28-9/3

HARVEY'S, 588-2411: Esquires, Jonas, Elements, 7/1-5; Williams & Ree, 7/6-12; Jackie Thomas, Woo Woo Stevens, 7/6-19; Sun Spots, 7/13-8/2; Kenny Laursen, Fred Thompson & The National Guadalajara Philharmonic, 7/20-8/2; Matys Brothers, 7/27-8/9; Sensations, 8/3-16; Rene Paulo, 8/10-30; Carmen D'Oro, 8/10-23; The Goofers, 8/18-9/7; Williams & Ree, 8/19-9/5; Trademark, Flight 602, 8/25-9/7

HYATT LAKE TAHOE, 831-1111: Kureks, thru 10/4; Martha's Children, thru 7/5; Spiral Starecase, 7/7-19; Motifs, 7/21-8/2; Winchester Cathedral, 8/4-16; Liz Damon's Orient Express, 8/18-9/13

SAHARA TAHOE, 588-6211: Liberace, thru 7/13; Engelbert, 7/14-24; Charo, 7/25-8/7

★ Reno, Sparks, Carson City

CARSON CITY NUGGET, 882-1626: Jerry Sun Show, thru 8/30

CIRCUS CIRCUS, 329-0711: Round the World Circus Acts, 11am-midnight, free

CLUB CAL-NEVA, 323-1046: Jerry Wallace, 7/3-4; The Hagars, 7/17-18; Tex Williams, 7/31-8/1; Sammy Smith, 8/14-15

ELDORADO, 786-5700: Twilight, thru 7/8; Dixieland Jazz Festival, 7/9-12; Joe & Paula, 7/13-8/1; Bo Moonie, 8/3-22; Sadao & Huai, 8/24-9/12

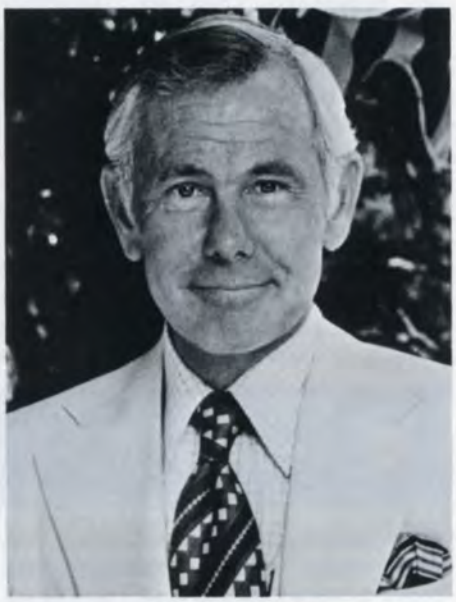
FITZGERALD'S, 786-3663: Carmen D'Oro, thru 7/12; Four Tunes Plus One, 7/14-8/2; Rose & The Arrangement, 8/4-23; Dan Miller Band, 8/25-9/20

HARRAH'S RENO, 329-4422: Bill Cosby, thru 7/1; Lou Rawls, 7/2-15; Bobby Vinton, 7/16-22; Mickey Gilley, Johnny Lee, 7/23-8/5; Joan Rivers, 8/6-19; Leo Sayer, 8/20-26; Gordon Lightfoot, 8/27-9/2

MAPES, 323-1611: Nightly entertainment

MGM GRAND HOTEL, 789-2000 (800-648-3568 toll free CA, AZ, OR, ID, UT): *Ziegfeld Theater:* Hello Hollywood Hello; *Lion's Den:*





In July 1967 Johnny Carson appeared in the Congo Room of Las Vegas' Sahara Hotel. Other headliners there that summer were Dinah Shore, Gina Lollabrigida and the Doddletown Pipers. A slightly more dapper and perhaps even funnier Carson performs at the Sahara August 21-23.



Lou Rawls appears at Harrah's Reno, July 2-15, and at the Aladdin in Las Vegas, August 20-26.

Sam Butera, Liz Damon's Orient Express, thru 7/14; Spun Gold, Zaras, 7/12-9/8

JOHN ASCUAGA'S NUGGET, Sparks, 358-2233: *Celebrity Room:* The Oak Ridge Boys, thru 7/8; Red Skelton, 7/9-8/5; Dick Clark's Good Ol' Rock 'n' Roll, 8/13-26; Ben Vereen, 8/27-9/2; *Casino Cabaret:* Good Times Follies, 7/1-28; Boxcar Willie, 8/18-22

ONSLOW, 786-7310: Nightly entertainment

ORMSBY HOUSE, Carson City, 882-1890: The Motifs, thru 7/12

RIVERSIDE, 786-4400: Toni Ingraham, thru 8/2; Zella Lehr, 8/3-30

SAHARA RENO, 322-1111: *Opera House Theatre:* Bal Du Moulin Rouge revue, indf.; *Gilded Cage Cabaret:* Leland 4, thru 7/5; Bubba Lou & The Extremes, 7/7-26; Sonny Turner, 7/28-8/16; Rusty Warren, 8/18-9/6

★ Rural Nevada

ELKO: Commercial Hotel, 738-3181, and Stockmen's Hotel, 738-5141

ELY: Hotel Nevada, 289-4414

FALLON: Fallon Nugget, 423-3111

GARDNERVILLE: Sharkey's, 782-3133

HAWTHORNE: El Capitan, 945-3322

JACKPOT: Cactus Pete's, 755-2321, and Horseshu Casino, 755-2331

TONOPAH: Mizpah, 482-6202

WENDOVER: Stateline Casino, 668-2221

WINNEMUCCA: Winners Inn, 623-2511

YERINGTON: Casino West, 463-2481, and Lucky Club, 463-2868

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Reno photographer Harry Upson's studies in black and white offer compelling views of a rider at sunset, season's change, depot at night and a peaceful country road.





The Lens features photographs submitted by readers that describe Nevada and its unique sights and lifestyles. Color transparencies must be 35mm or larger. Unmounted prints, either color or black and white, must be between 8"x8" and 11"x14" and printed on glossy paper. Mail submission to The Lens, Nevada Magazine, Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nevada 89710. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return.



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Teenage Lion Hunters

Catching a mountain lion was no easy task for any rancher, so there was considerable excitement in Pine Valley when two brave girls bagged a too-bold cat. By Harry E. Webb

Pioneer women were usually able to cope with any emergency, whether it was wielding a 15-pound rifle or expertly combating ailments that befell the family.

But those early day females had nothing on two of my Pine Valley neighbors. The girls in this little drama were of Shoshone blood, and as for bravery and versatility, Emalene and Florence Buckskin could put the old-timers in the back seat.

In 1916 the government had declared war on every breed of predatory animal, and in subsequent years employed hundreds of hunters and trappers. Sheepmen were annually losing 10 to 15 percent of their woollies—especially lambs—to coyotes and bobcats. But the cunningest of all killers of grown stock was the mountain lion.

Along the rugged range beginning at my Pine Mountain ranch and extending south for 50 miles, there were more of those killers of sheep, deer and horses than in any other area. Dan Rand, a Pine Valley rancher, and I got within a hundred yards of a pack of six lions while out hunting horses, but they all escaped into the timbered ledges nearby. Another time, when we were following a band of mustangs along a mountain trail, we saw a lion leap on one and both go rolling down the hillside. Naturally, we couldn't stop to investigate the result.

But one particular lion in the area was not only a savage killer but also a loner and exceptionally bold. It also seemed to have a preference for horse flesh and particularly for those belonging to the Buckskin family

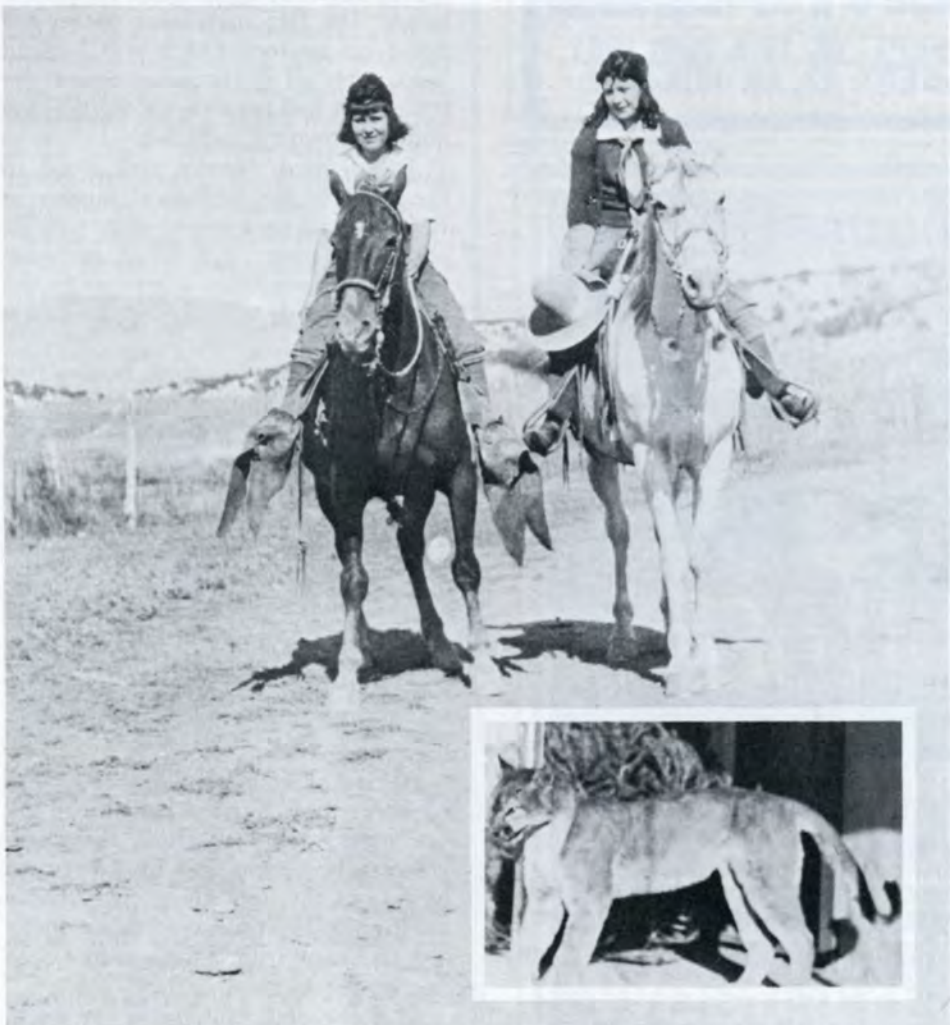
Nooky and Maggie Buckskin had a small ranch near Mineral Hill with a few cows, a couple dozen good saddle and work horses, and so many children they were like the old woman who lived in the shoe. The two older boys were away fighting the Kaiser's armies, and an older sister, Hattie, was married. The youngest boy, Web, and four kid sisters—Emma, Florence, Mary and Nevada-Rose—remained at home.

There had been intermittent losses among the ranch horses for some time and the family believed the deaths were due to the malady "brain fever," and that coyotes had been eating on them. Nooky set traps around the carcasses, and though many coyotes were caught, it was small compensation for what he supposed was this brain disease.

Then one day, out in the big juniper-speckled pasture, he found a horse carcass covered over with sticks, tree limbs and raked-up dirt. According to legend, this was a sure sign of a lion kill and that Mr. Lion had covered the horse for future use and *return.* But after Nooky set traps around the carcass, the lion never came back.

Even with Nooky's traditional cunning the big cat was a problem beyond his know-how. Lion hunters were known to have little success unless the lion had been treed or run to cover by experienced lion dogs, and the Buckskins had but one small ranch dog.

To outwit the lion, or lions, Nooky took to keeping his horses in the stockade corral, but this was a nuisance and used up winter hay. After there had been no loss for a week, the family decided their horse killers had moved away to satisfy their appetites on deer



Florence and Emalene Buckskin were 15 and 16, respectively, when they bagged this trophy mountain lion that had been terrorizing their family's ranch.



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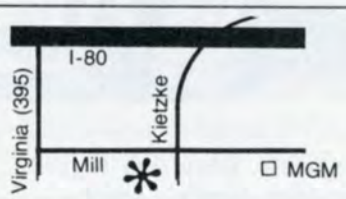
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and sheep. Bands of sheep were then trailing south to winter range around Tonopah, so there was no lack of lion food.

One November morning before sunrise Nooky went out to the corral to let the horses out in the big pasture. On reaching the gate he noticed that the horses were moving nervously about. Suddenly a big lion leapt off an old shed roof onto a horse's neck, and the horse dropped as if felled by a sledge-hammer.

With a yell Nooky ran for his rifle, but on his return the lion was headed across the meadow with the little dog yipping in pursuit. The commotion brought the family running to the corral where the horse lay thrashing about. "It's Brownie!" little Nevada-Rose screamed. "He's killed Brownie! Oh, Daddy, do something, don't let him die!" Brownie was the girl's pet horse, and she was inconsolable.

Just then a neighbor rode up. He and Nooky had planned on going to a silver prospect but the bedlam of crying girls changed that plan in a hurry. The two men tried to get the horse on its feet, but it was beyond help. After all ministrations failed, the bullet that had been meant for the lion ended Brownie's suffering.

Exasperated, Nooky sent word to the chief of the Biological Survey in Reno to send up a government trapper with lion dogs. But since no such hunter was available, it was up to the Buckskin family to make out the best it could.

By December no more horses had been molested and the family believed that the little dog's chase had scared the lion away for keeps. But they continued corraling the horses every night.

One Sunday, Nooky, Maggie and Web went to do some work on the silver vein, leaving the four girls at the ranch. Emma, 16, and Florence, 15, were to keep watch over the pastured horses while their younger sisters, Mary and Nevada-Rose, were left to their own devices.

At noon Emma and Florence galloped home for a hurried bite to eat. On returning to the pasture they saw where a horse had slid down a steep hillside in the light snow. They could tell from the first scattered marks that a lion had leapt from a juniper tree onto one of the horses.

Still mounted, they were staring in wonderment when some magpies flew up from the sagebrush in the draw

below. There the girls saw the lion tearing at the neck of the dead horse, so they cautiously retreated out of the animal's sight to form plans.

"Emma," Florence chattered, "you hurry back and get Daddy's gun! Hurry fast, and bring the .22 rifle, too. I'll stay and watch and if it leaves I'll try and scare him up a tree." It took but a few minutes for Emma to race the half mile home, grab Nooky's 25-35 carbine and the .22 pump-action Winchester.

The lion was still eating when Emma returned. Sneaking through the junipers, the girls selected a good spot and opened fire, dropping the beast in his tracks. On circling the carcass, guns ready, the girls could see that Emma's 25-35 bullet had torn half the animal's skull away and Florence's .22 had entered its ribs. But in their excitement they put several more slugs in him for good measure. As Nooky said later, "That lion skin looked like the girls had been practicing on it all day with shotguns!"

The girls had a hard time at first getting a horse near the lion. Then, tying Emma's horse to a nearby juniper tree, they blindfolded him with her coat and hobbled him with a bridle rein. Then they dragged the lion over to the horse. Amazingly, they were able to lift the heavy, blood-soaked beast into the saddle. They later explained, "It was because we were so excited and determined to accomplish everything ourselves that it lent us a strength we never knew we possessed."

There was a lot of rejoicing in the Buckskin home that night when their parents returned. And if it had been a hippopotamus or Bengal tiger the girls had slain, it couldn't have caused more exclamations as the news spread over our 50-mile "pumpkin-line" telephone.

But just killing the lion and ending their horse losses wasn't quite enough. Emma and Florence decided to make a trophy. After the lion was weighed, tipping the steelyards at 135 pounds and measuring just over nine feet, the girls carefully skinned it. Then they spread a paste of cooked oatmeal and saltpeter over the flesh side for tanning.

When the skin was tanned and pliable, they sewed it back to shape. Then, with the help of little Nevada-Rose, who was a natural born sculptress and designer, they stuffed the lion skin with straw and paper. And all of us who viewed the somewhat shortened form, caused by tanning, pronounced it an excellent job of taxidermy. □

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Virginia City: The Looking Glass

Virginia City is one of those special places that touches in strange and delightful ways. It fascinates. It transports us back in time. It is indisputably The Real Thing. By Phillip Finch

Some places are special, not so much for what they are as for what they do to the people who behold them. They touch us in ways strange and delightful; they draw from us emotions long dormant.

Virginia City is such a place. It fascinates. It makes us feel. That a collection of buildings and artifacts should do this—while other similar collections do not—is a mystery with a multitude of explanations. They are variously plausible. None is perfect.

Maybe it is the lay of the city across the land. The structures angle straight up from Mount Davidson's steepness, a defiant arrangement. The way Virginia's builders laid their gridwork of streets on the impossible terrain suggests impudence and recklessness. There's something crazy about the way humans insist on familiar patterns despite all that nature does to dissuade us. Crazy, but inspiring for all that. Virginia City



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Virginia City in the 1870s, looking south from Cedar Hill.



Boys pose on the siding of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad looking south to St. Mary's in the Mountains.

is, above all, a peculiarly human gesture. Call that a poet's explanation.

Students of psychology might refer to the *gestalt* theory, which holds that some arrangements of forms have an impact greater than the sum of their parts. Maybe that explains Virginia's effect. Perhaps the combination of shapes and textures, the red brick facades against the blue Nevada sky, the flaking paint and the rusty tin roofs and the dust that swirls on the streets and the mountain's sinuous slopes, and all the other qualities of light and shape and color somehow make Virginia City more than it seems to be.

And perhaps there's something to the metaphysical belief that every place accumulates a residue of spent energy, a byproduct of living. For sure, Virginia City has seen plenty of living, plenty of recklessness and turbulence and despair and exultation. This is the stuff of life, and if it leaves traces then Virginia City must be sodden with it.

Whatever the explanation, there is no denying the effect. Thousands of people see the place every year; few of them are bored and most of them are astounded. It is, after all, a cracking good "ghost town." Better than Tombstone, better than Calico in the Mojave Desert, better as a living relic than almost all the Gold Rush towns on the other side of the Sierra. For all the happily garish hot dog stands and ice cream parlors and souvenir stores that line C Street, it retains its authenticity. Aficionados of old mining towns want the feel and the look of the community that once thrived. They want to believe that they've gone back in time. And Virginia transports them. It is indisputably The Real Thing.

Virginia is more than visitors, of course. It touches not just those who come for a few hours but also those who come and stay a few years. It is a living city and home to 700 persons. And they may know the special pull of the place better than anyone.

Who are they? Descendents, some of them, of the pioneers who built the city. Others saw the place and simply wanted to stay. They all share a palpable affection for their home.

Remember that this is not an easy place to live. The roads get icy; snow always sticks sooner and falls heavier up on the mountain than in the valleys. The sun ducks behind the mountain too early in the afternoons. The wind whips down off that mountainside something terrible. The place is too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter.

Before 1859 Virginia's population was scant, mostly bands of speculating miners. Four years later there were more than 10,000 people on the spot. They had all come there voluntarily. And when the boom ended, those who stayed did because they had good reasons for staying.

Maybe that starts to get to the heart of the matter. Virginia City wouldn't be much without its people, those who built it and left it, those who stayed and watched its decline, those who came again, those who visit in such multitudes. The place has had plenty of opportunities to roll over and die, but it never has. You may ascribe that to some mystical power of survival, but that would be cheating the people who have kept it going.

It's just a city, after all, a place for people, for us and by us. And given that, it is not such a great leap to the conclusion that we like Virginia City because it is nothing more than a looking glass, showing us something in ourselves that pleases us no end. □



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOS

C Street merchants display their selection of Thanksgiving turkeys.

Blue Dirt & the Big Bonanza

After word of the Comstock strike spread across the Sierra, Virginia City grew into the West's wildest and richest boomtown. Through boom and bust, change came naturally to the old camp, and so did survival.
By Phillip Finch

Change has come naturally to Virginia City. That has been a matter of survival; the town has had at least five forms in the space of as many human generations.

Virginia City wasn't supposed to last long, at least not in its original incarnation. Between 1850 and 1859 miners camped at Dayton, Johntown, Silver City, Gold Hill and Virginia as they prospected up Gold Canyon, in the austere, rocky country along the western edge of the Forty Mile Desert.

Nineteenth century gold camps were slapdash afterthoughts, temporary, disposable. They were built by men who needed fast shelter, and who had no time to lavish on anything but their claims. The miners' shacks and cabins were supposed to last only as long as the pay dirt did—and pay dirt always gave out.

Enter Phase Two, with a couple of earth-rattling discoveries. One was the rich gold deposit found by Peter O'Riley and Patrick McLaughlin in the spring of 1859 at the head of Six Mile Canyon, on the claim known as the Ophir. Then there was the discovery of a bothersome bluish dirt that kept clogging the riffle boxes and rockers with which miners collected their placer gold. For months they tossed the blue stuff away. Then a prospector sent a sample of the rock to Grass Valley, California, to be assayed. The results were supposed to be secret, but word trickled back over the Sierra anyway: the blue stuff was silver sulphide, worth more than $800 per ton.

Before the summer of '59, the region's population was in the dozens. The rush in the autumn of that year pushed the number into the hundreds. And when the Sierra passes opened in the spring, thousands of prospectors and adventurers poured into the area.

It was still a mining camp, but with a grandness and scope in proportion to the riches that were being discovered in the shafts and tunnels beneath the



View of the south side of booming Virginia City with the Savage works on the right and the Combination shaft to the east.



UNR SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Virginia's main street in the early days showed dusty streets, lots of wires and building fronts that are familiar today.

city. In '60 a German engineer, Philipp Deidesheimer, invented the system of square-set timbering that allowed miners to open up subterranean galleries and to tunnel safely through uncertain ground. Investors in San Francisco fought for shares in the new mines—the Ophir, the Central, the Mexican, the Gould and Curry. Some veins paid out at thousands of dollars to the ton.

Nevada had simply never seen the like of such mineral wealth, nor the like of the town that grew up above the mines. By '63 the population of the city proper was estimated at 15,000. The suburbs of Gold Hill and Silver City may have held an additional 5,000 or more. This was within a few square miles of land that, in the winter of '59, one disgruntled miner had damned as "no place for a man to live."



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A V.I.P. party visits the mines in 1879. From left: John Mackay, Mrs. M.G. Gillette, U.S. Grant Jr., Mrs. Grant, U.S. Grant, S. Yanda, Mrs. Fair, Governor Kinkead and Jim Fair.



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Teamsters hauling lumber on North C Street, late 1800s.

Never had Virginia been so full of rowdy life, so full of brash optimism and bluster, so vibrant with energy. Fortunes were being made every day, some during stock-buying frenzies in the town's new brokerage houses and some in the mines. In a few years, the studious miner and superintendent named John Mackay would become one of the world's richest men with a string of shrewd decisions based on geological deduction. His crews found rich deposits, first in the Kentuck, then in the Hale & Norcross, then finally in a mine called the Consolidated Virginia that everyone else had given up for barren. The discovery of the massive Big Bonanza deep in the Con Virginia in 1873 is one of the great mining stories of history.

By '65 Virginia City had its first brick structures and two-story buildings along C Street. All day and all night the earth rumbled with blasts in the mines. Whistles and gunshots and laughter and music and the chuffing of steam engines filled air that had known only desert silence. In a few years there would be bigger buildings and even greater riches. But it wouldn't be the same. Never again would Virginia hum and crackle with the electric excitement of those early silver years.

"A year after the fire, Virginia had more mines and miners than ever before."



Call that a youthful exuberance. And call the big fire of 1875 a quick and painful step into maturity.

Phase Three began with a fire in a rooming house owned by one "Crazy Kate" Shea. Her wooden frame building went up quickly. So did the adjoining houses. Wind whipped the fire eastward, down the slope, toward C Street and the business district. At the fire's peak it was a square-mile inferno. It burned up an estimated 2,000 buildings in the central and northern parts of the city. But Virginia City's heart was below ground. Thanks to firemen and miners, the fire never spread into the mines with the millions of board-feet of timber that would have fed flames for years.

The next morning, Virginia's residents were at work clearing away the rubble so that they could rebuild. They cared about their city. They also knew that the silver and gold in the mines could reconstruct Virginia City a hundred times if necessary.

This time they built it for the ages. Most of the brick buildings along today's C Street are from that era. And



Miners at the Ophir who worked eight-hour shifts in the dark, sweltering drifts below the city.

by 1876, a year after the fire, there were more mines being worked and more miners working them than ever before on the Comstock—or ever again. By now Virginia was a businesslike place, its citizens single-minded and purposeful as they went about the job of taking riches from the earth.

And then one day there was no more gold, no more silver.

It didn't happen all at once, of course. For a while there was as much ore as ever being worked in Virginia City. But it wasn't yielding what it once had. Then came layoffs and a gradual diminution of profits. Phase Four drew slowly on the city—low-grade operations kept it at bay for a few years—but when John Mackay sold the last of his interests on the Comstock in 1895, there was no denying the reality.

Without gold and silver the city had little to hold its people. Miners went elsewhere for work. Without them and their families the merchants had no market. The thousands became a few hundred, hanging on because, no matter how barren its mines, Virginia had become home. Some of them stayed because they had hope. They believed in a bonanza; the place still whispered promises. It had happened once. It could happen again.

And eventually it did, in a modest and most unlikely fashion. By the act of withering, by becoming grim and weary, Virginia City kept itself alive. It happened in the fourth and fifth decades of this century. Americans got into their cars and went looking for their history. Virginia City, with its shabby old buildings and empty, sagging houses, was history preserved. Millions of dollars had poured out of Virginia and into the rest of the world. Now some of that wealth began to trickle back, in the form of tourist dollars. It might not have been the most glamorous way for an old dowager to pay the bills, but it kept her going.

That's Phase Five: the souvenir shops, the museums, the candy stores and popcorn stands. There's life again in Virginia City. It may look garish and gaudy, but that's in character. In all of its forms, Virginia City has always had some rough edges.

Now there's a new mining boomlet. Modern prices for gold and silver have brought companies and speculators back to claims that were deemed unprofitable 90 years ago. Houston International has been open pit mining at the site of the original Gold Hill discoveries one mile south of town. United Mining is burrowing under Virginia at the old Savage digs. Anaconda is prospecting below town in Six Mile Canyon.

Phase Six looms, but Virginia City is unperturbed. If nothing else, it has learned to cope with change. □



Mackay and partners followed the Gould & Curry shaft to the Big Bonanza in 1873. South on D Street is today's Mackay Mansion.

Phillip Finch is the author of several books including the recent Birthright, *a novel set in early Virginia City, and* Texas Dawn, *published last spring by Seaview Books.*

History & Honky Tonk

Today in Virginia City you can still find history, mines, religion and other boardwalk bonanzas. By David Moore with photographs by Bill Germino.

Mark Twain, the *Territorial Enterprise's* most famous cub reporter, wrote that Virginia City was "the 'livest' town, for its age and population, that America had ever produced." The town is 120 years older now, but it still has that indelible bonanza spirit. Scores of businesses are lined elbow to elbow along C Street, and on summer weekends a party atmosphere prevails in the streets.

Virginia City is not a perfectly preserved 19th-century mining town. But beneath the modern trappings there's a great deal of history, surprises and fun to be found in the old camp. Here are some suggested sights and scenes.

VIRGINIA REELS

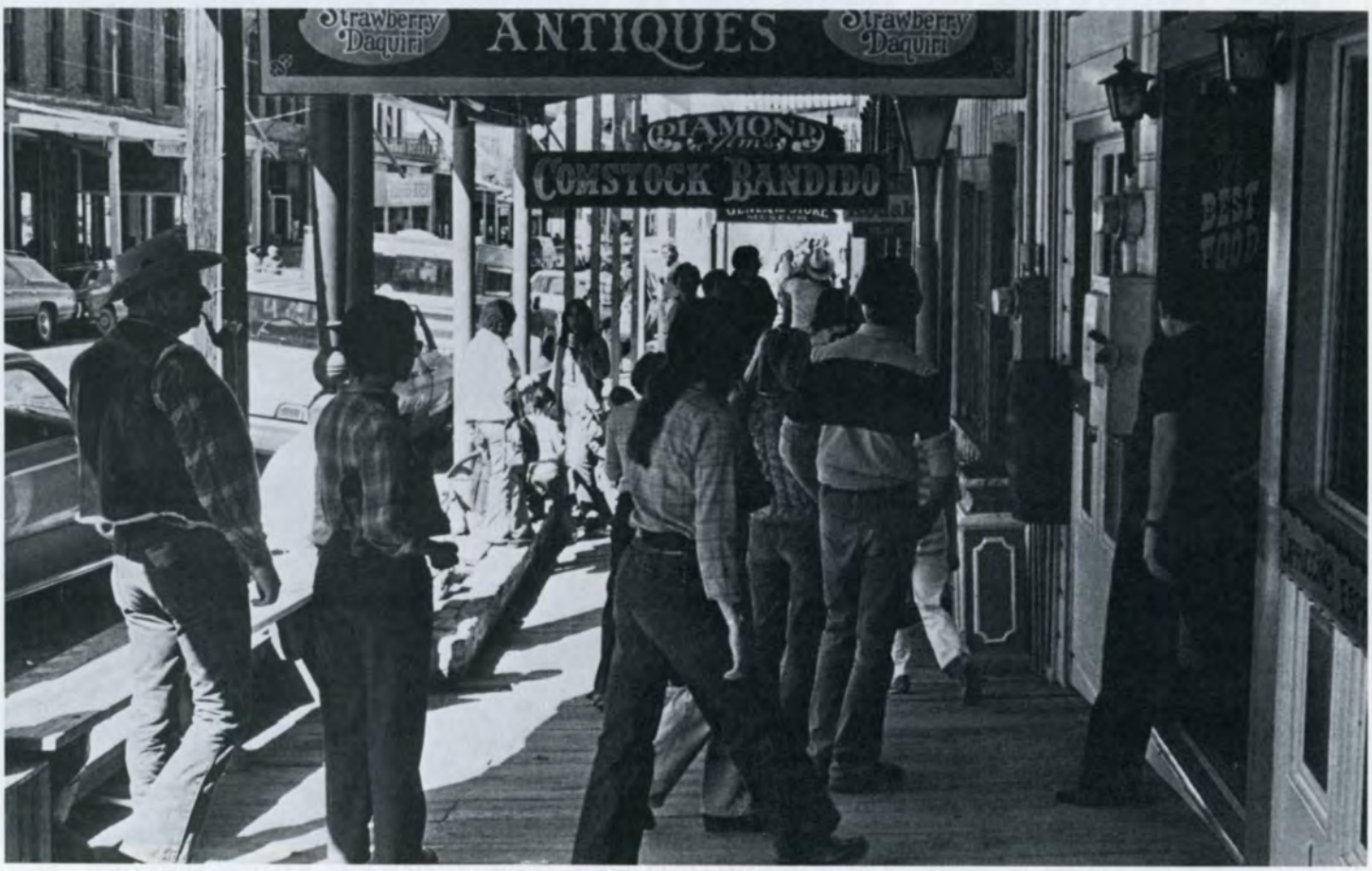
See both of the movies you'll find on C Street. The 18-minute slide and sound show at the Visitors Bureau is vintage but still illuminating. Donations —adults 50 cents, kids free—are requested. The Visitors Bureau also has ample racks of Comstock literature. In the cool basement of the Silver Dollar Hotel you can watch "The Richest Place on Earth," a 17-minute tribute to Virginia's early miners and the Comstock spirit. It was made by Fred Hobbs, proprietor, maker of horror films and coauthor of the book by the same name. Admission is $2 adults, kids free. Both flicks are good introductions to local history and sights, and offer the advantage of letting you speak knowledgeably about the area even if you get no further than the nearest bar.

THE SUBTERRANEANS

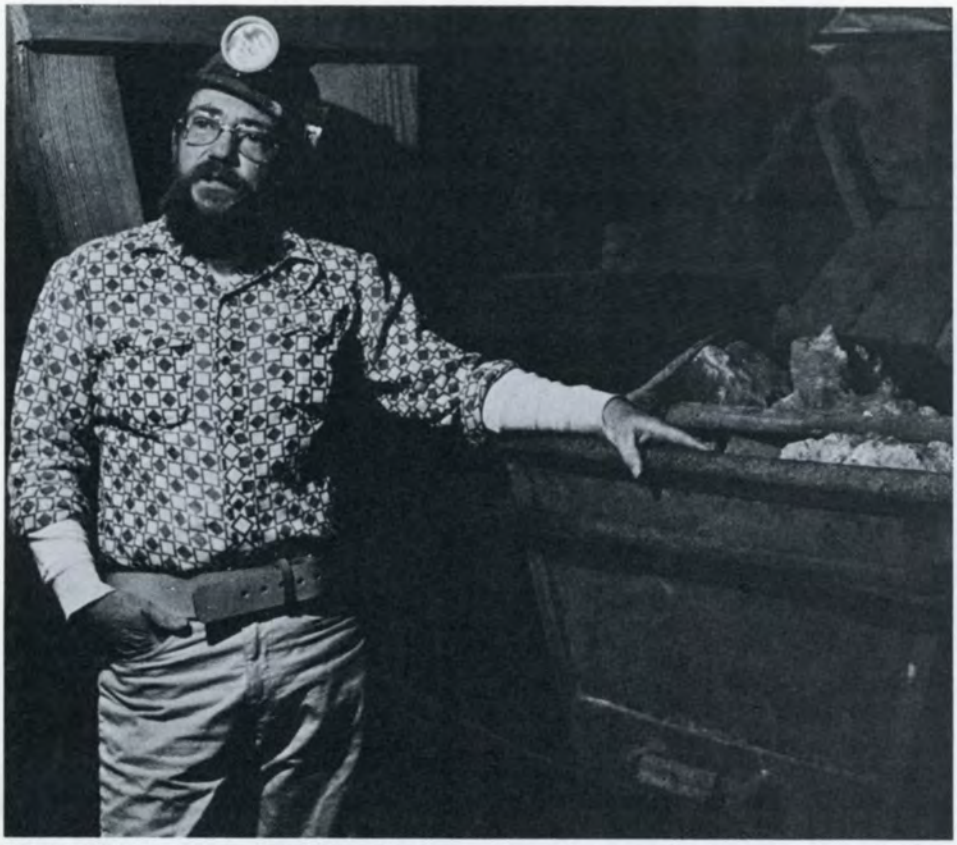
Virginia's wealth may have showed on top, but it all came from underground. Today you can take a look under the city with the mine tours at the Ponderosa Saloon and the Chollar Mine. Guides on both tours explain early mining techniques, history and the unique square-set timbering pioneered on the Comstock. In summer the tunnels' coolness alone is almost worth the price of admission.

The Ponderosa tunnel, which was dug, mucked and opened by Virginian Greg Hess in 1978, links the saloon with an old drift of the Best & Belcher, one of the city's first mines. The 20-minute tour is $2.50 adults, $1 kids under 12 and $6 families.

The Chollar tour follows the underground passage of another prominent mine of the city's bonanza days. It's located just off South F Street above the V&T tracks. It's $2.50 adults, $1 ages 6 to 14 and younger kids free.



Looking for sights, history and daiquiris on the boardwalk of today's Virginia City.



Miner Johnny Gunn explains the operation of an underground mine at the Ponderosa tour into the Best & Belcher.

MINERS, FIREMEN & JULIA

On Virginia's main street you'll find seven museums presenting an intriguing mixture of history, legend and cornpone. Two charge admission, four take set "donations" at the exit, and one accepts donations "if you feel like it." From north to south:

If you're interested in Comstock mining history, The Way It Was is the best stop. Featured are old mining equipment, mill and mine models, ore samples and historic photos. Admission is 75 cents with kids under 11 free.

The Wild West Museum has a wild array of guns, hunting trophies, the Face on the Barroom Floor and a John Wayne memorial. For a quarter you can see a reenactment of the 1867 murder of Virginia's prostitute with a heart, Julia Bulette. Donations are $1.50 adults, 50 cents kids.

The centerpiece of the new Great Western Museum is a 1909 Excelsior Auto Cycle, and the rest of the building is filled with other unusual Comstock and Nevada antiques collected by owner Tiny Carlson. Donations are planned to be 75 cents adults, 25 cents kids.

Grant's General Store is an excellent reproduction of a turn-of-the-century store created by proprietor Ron Brooks. The museum's 25,000 items range from genuine Arrow Collars in the clothing section to a Las Vegas Cigars sign in the barbershop. Old gambling antiques are also exhibited. Donations are $1.50 adults, 75 cents kids.

A good stop for railroad fans is the Mark Twain Museum of Memories, where you can see the late Grahame Hardy's collection of V&T photos and equipment. Also featured are player pianos, crank phones and a desk said to have been Mark Twain's. Usual adult donation is $2, "but we do not give people a bad time about it," says owner Paula Hardy. Kids are free.

Next door is the Comstock Firemen's Museum run by the town's volunteer firefighters. The building has been a brewery, firehouse and town hall. As a museum it has a colorful collection of antique hose carts, uniforms and photos dating back to the 1860s. There also are public restrooms. Donations are accepted "if you feel like it," says one volunteer.



Thirsty crowd takes a break in the afternoon at the Bucket of Blood, one of Virginia's 21 watering holes.



You can act out your frontier fantasies at one of the old time photo shops.

The prime attractions of the House of Memories are the historic chandeliers, altars and vestments from St. Mary's in the Mountains Catholic Church, items discarded by a no-frills priest in the 1950s. Flanking are the Wax Museum and Territorial Prison and the Old Boarding House. Check as you enter for each museum's donations, which range from 25 and 50 cents to $1.

OLD TIME RELIGION

Three of the town's most famous landmarks are its churches. The grandest is St. Mary's in the Mountains, the fourth church erected by Virginia's Catholic congregation, which numbered between 3,000 and 5,000 in the 1870s. Like St. Mary's, nearby St. Paul's Episcopal Church was rebuilt after the fire of 1875. It is constructed of native pine, and wooden pegs still join beams to walls. A survivor of the fire was the Presbyterian Church, built in 1867 with funds raised from mining stocks. St. Mary's and St. Paul's are open for inspection, and St. Mary's and the Presbyterian Church have Sunday services.

EDWIN BOOTH PLAYED HERE

During the Comstock's heyday moguls and miners gathered at Piper's Opera House on B Street for Shakespeare, melodramas, concerts and wrestling matches. It's open for visitors in the summer, and you can see the 1885 theater's hand-painted curtain and its unusual spring-mounted stage. During July the old show house is opened for weekend performances by Louise Driggs, great-granddaughter of founder John Piper. Tour donations are posted at the entrance.

BONANZA MANSIONS

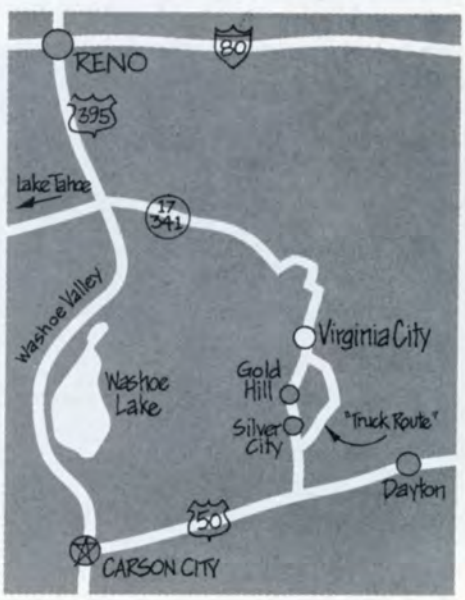
Some early Comstockers lived in tents and caves, while more prosperous residents lived in splendid style. Today several fine Victorian mansions are open for visitors.

At the well-restored Savage Mansion, built in 1861, the long staircases climb from the former mine office on the first floor to the superintendent's living quarters on the upper two levels. The mansion still has many original furnishings. U.S. Grant stayed there in 1879, and you can, too, for $40 (two people) a night. Tours are $3 adults and 50 cents for kids under 12.

A block north on D Street is the Mackay Mansion, which dates from 1860. It served as the headquarters of the Gould & Curry Mine and after the fire of 1875 was the residence of miner-turned-millionaire John Mackay. The mansion is noted for its Victorian porchways and colorful gardens. Tours are $2.50 adults, $1 high school students and free for younger kids.

The Castle on B Street was built as a pleasure home in 1863 by Robert Graves, a status-minded Englishman and Empire Mine superintendent. The three-story home, copied after a Normandy castle, features original European furnishings and great views of town. Tours are $1.50 adults, 25 cents for kids 6 to 12, free for younger kids.

Nearby is the Cole Mansion, which was built in 1887 by A.M. Cole, Virginia pharmacist who lived in the house until 1914. The two-story, wood-framed home is a fine example of period architecture. The mansion is



expected to be open for tours this summer for $2 adults and 50 cents children.

ART & ANTIQUES

Collectors who fancy western art and antiques will find several quality galleries in Virginia.

The Bromund Gallery on B Street features works by the late western painter Cal Bromund and by Leigh Hoganson of Reno. On C Street, the Riata Gallery has antiques and the works of Nevada artists Lyle Ball, Phil Penn and Bill Moore and limited edition prints of the Cowboy Artists Association.

For antiques, visit Comstock Antiques on B Street and Silver Stope Antiques and the Eilley Orrum, both on C.

TAKING SOME STEAM

The Virginia & Truckee Railroad, originally built in 1869, was the world's richest rail line in the 1870s when its owners were clearing more than $100,000 a month. The Comstock run was abandoned in 1936. But in 1976 Californian Bob Gray revived the V&T, and it has been chugging along since then from F Street to Gold Hill. A guide narrates the three mile round trip. Tickets are $2.25 adults, $1 ages 5 to 12, and free for younger kids.

MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR

You can leave the driving to Les Rinehart and take a 15-minute ride on his Washoe Trolley, a motorized old-time omnibus based at the Delta parking lot. The trolley tour includes back street sights and narration on Virginia history and landmarks. Tickets are $1.50, kids under four free.

VIRGINIA'S BOOT HILL

On Cemetery Hill to the northeast you can walk through the town's old graveyards. Among the hundreds of graves and ornate monuments is that of Edward Storey, one-time captain of the Virginia Rifles. He was killed in a battle with Paiutes at Pyramid Lake in 1860 and is the namesake of Storey County.

COMSTOCK CELEBRATIONS

Each year Virginia City hosts a number of events and celebrations. Here is the schedule for this summer, fall and winter; see the Nevada Calendar for details on July and August events:

July 4—Independence Day Parade
July 12, 19, 25—Piper's Festival
Aug. 1-2—Firemen's Muster
Sept. 11-13—Camel Races
Sept. 19—100-Mile Horse Ride
Sept. 26—Ferrari Hill Climb
Nov. 14—Firemen's Dinner Dance

Comstock Saloons

Virginia City's 21 watering holes are famous for generous amounts of music, lore and good cheer.



An early Virginia City saloon, complete with ornate bar front.

According to Gold Hill newspaperman Wells Drury, Virginia City "by authentic count" had exactly 100 saloons in 1876. The number is somewhat lower these days; there are 21 counting dinner house bars. That still allows for one bar for every 35 residents—and ample opportunity to partake of the saloons' varied attractions in days and evenings.

Here is the C Street roll, listing first the old timers.

Crystal Bar—This famous Virginia City saloon has a century-old bar, beautiful gold-plated crystal chandeliers, and even a part-time barbershop. But the Crystal's best sparkle is that of its proprietors, Bill and Margaret Marks. The saloon dates to 1863, and it has been in the Marks family since 1901. Bill makes his own mixes, and patrons can slurp delicious special drinks—hot toddies in winter, and the best mint juleps this side of Mississippi in summer. Among the framed photos on the walls is a 1946 spread from *LIFE* Magazine honoring the Crystal as one of America's great saloons. It still is.

Delta Saloon—Angelo Petrini's wood paneled establishment is busy by day with visitors attracted by the Delta's old time atmosphere, its 21 table and more than 100 slot machines. The bar is also a favorite with locals, who gather for after-shifters and often keep the place open till the late hours, and with touring politicians. In the rear is the Suicide Table, a faro game said to have cost the fortunes and lives of at least three of the game's owners. For dining, you'll find Ross Hilton's Delta Restaurant next door.

Bucket of Blood—"Since 1876" reads the sign of Don McBride's saloon, which features lively music and antique fixtures. You can try the slots, belly the bar or relax at the bandstand tables for Red Watson's afternoon banjo sessions



BILL GERMINO

The Ponderosa honors a longtime former bartender, Tom Halbert.

or the swing and jazz bands that entertain many evenings. Art Kuzniewski runs the headline print shop and offers a growing selection of bizarre bumper stickers.

The Ponderosa—This bar is housed in Virginia's old Bank of California building. The vault is still there, and a mine tunnel in the rear is open for guided tours. It's a popular place for afternoon drinking and early morning coffee.

Silver Queen—The Queen is named for a giant mural inside of a woman dressed in 3,261 silver dollars. The saloon has slot machines and an upstairs dance hall where you can stomp to country-western bands many weekends. If you're in the marrying mood, you can find Justice of the Peace Ed Colletti and arrange for services in the Queen's wedding chapel.

Union Brewery—This well-known sluicing spot has been in operation since 1873. It was run by Bronco Lazerri from about 1926 to 1949 and came under Gordon Lane's guidance in the early '50s. What makes the Brewery unique is the attitude of the proprietor. As Gordon's sign above the bar says, "This is my house and I do as I dam please." On a busy day it's the only doorway in town blocked by a barstool. Few mixed drinks are served. There is ice, hot water, pineapple juice, live soda water early in the day and occasionally a fresh lemon. But Gordon's selection of potables rivals any other in the West, and so does the good cheer.—*Louis Beaupre*

Other Virginia saloons, from north to south on C Street:

Assay Office—Virginia's northernmost bar has music, Mexican food and a gift shop.

Longbranch—A high-ceilinged saloon in red and gold motif that features rock and country music on weekends.

Silver Stope—If you like jazz and good food, Merle and Michelle Koch's saloon is your place. The dinner house in the rear specializes in steak and seafood. On Sundays at 5 p.m. Merle sits down to the piano and joins his band of regulars and visiting jazz musicians to play through the evening. No, the rocks in the ceiling never fall.

Stage Stop—Virginia's premier late-night local hangout has a strong juke box, plenty of pool action and care and attention from owners Bob and Cherie Dozier. Check the next tequila party.

Bonanza—The saloon-casino is dominated by slots and gifts, and there's a 21 table at the rear. The bar is a good after-shift stop and offers a great view down Six Mile Canyon.



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOS

The barkeep has everything in order in this early day tavern. In 1876 Virginia had 100 saloons.

Julia Bulette's—Gordon Churchward's place, formerly known as the Sky Deck, is one of Virginia's friendliest and sometimes zaniest saloons. Julia's has excellent breakfasts (6-11 a.m.) and sandwiches and pizzas (all day).

Comstock—Recently remodeled, this old bar will share its quarters with a snack bar and several gift shops this summer.

Mark Twain—Whether or not Sam Clemens ever drank on this site, the Mark Twain is a friendly day-time saloon, presided over by Paul Peterson.

Red Garter—This large saloon and gambling hall is a colorful Victorian reproduction with lots of slot action and two frequently-filled 21 tables in the front windows.

The Sazarac—A small, comfortable bar with a sandwich kitchen, the Sazarac features exotic mixtures like strawberry daiquiris.

Sharon House—Proprietor Lynn Leong's dinner house features steaks and Chinese food. The front bar has a great collection of historic photos.

Washoe Club—An old-time bar featuring piano artist Bobby Watson and other celebrities on stage.

Tahoe House—Known primarily as a South C Street breakfast and lunch stop, the bar is open days.

Wagon Wheel—A new dinner house with a great view of town and the Dayton Valley from the saloon.

Dolly's—A four-stool bar with restaurant and the largest wall mirrors in town, it's located near the Fourth Ward School.

Maynard Station—One mile south in Gold Hill is this six-year-old tavern. It's a favorite hangout for miners working at Houston Internation Minerals' diggings.



Customers get elbow room at the rail while an attentive, white-jacketed bartender awaits the next call.

The Magic Mountain

Rising 1,684 feet above Virginia City, Mount Davidson is one of the state's most-conquered peaks. Yet a strange aura surrounds the mountain, and two intrepid climbers decided to get to the top of the mystery.

By Roger Smith

"I determined to make the ascent of Mount Davidson and so reach a point above the clouds. Accompanied by half a dozen friends, I started a few minutes before 8 o'clock in the evening, and, pressing upward through the fast-falling snow, and through the dense cloud-mass, which we entered on the upper slopes of the mountain, at 10 o'clock we reached the topmost peak, and to our delight found that we at last stood above the clouds and storm."

—Dan DeQuille, ***The Big Bonanza***

Nobody climbs Mount Davidson, the conical peak looming over Virginia City and the crown of the Virginia Range, for adventure—at least no one has in the last hundred years. Familiarity ruins adventure, and Davidson's summit is probably the most familiar, the most frequently conquered in Nevada. You can hardly find a person in Virginia City who won't admit having trudged up it once or twice to kill a summer afternoon, and that's been pretty much the case since the Comstock was discovered in 1859. No, people make the trip out of an even less definable urge: it seems that a strange mystique hovers around Davidson, as clouds occasionally do, graying it and making it appear much larger, more remote and compelling than should be possible.

No one really knows who first conquered the blossom of granite that is Davidson's peak—perhaps a pre-Comstock sourdough who found himself drawn ever higher in search of a likely ledge. It doesn't really matter. But it does matter that many people have climbed it since. There's something uncanny about Davidson's attraction. Before I first climbed up, I had heard stories, strange stories of derbied men in suits and ladies in long white summer gowns picnicking on the summit (there are no roads all the way to the top), and the even odder tale of Masonic rituals held there. Legend, I thought. Then I read Dan DeQuille's account in *The Big Bonanza* of his trip up in winter—in a snowstorm—just to watch an eclipse. The mountain began to pique my imagination. Was it something special? How could it lure so many to such heights?

With the help of Gary Short, a high school English teacher in Virginia City, I looked up a few longtime residents and questioned them about Davidson. They would smile and say, yes, they had made the climb a few times and there was nothing much to it. But they wouldn't go into details, as if it were a kind of indiscretion to rise to such foolishness. When we pressed them for specifics, they repeated stories they had heard from their fathers or described the annual Fourth of July race to run Old Glory up the huge, rusty flagpole on the peak.

Gary and I decided we would only get on top of the mystery by first getting on top of Davidson. So we

These hardy Comstockers climbed to the top of Davidson to declare their votes in 1888.



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOS

climbed, and the climbing turned out to be neither very easy nor very difficult. We beat DeQuille's time by 15 minutes and felt smug about it. Still, hopping up slabs of rock and, later, scrambling and slipping on aprons of fine scree had made my temples thump and my legs feel like slinkies by the time I reached the top.

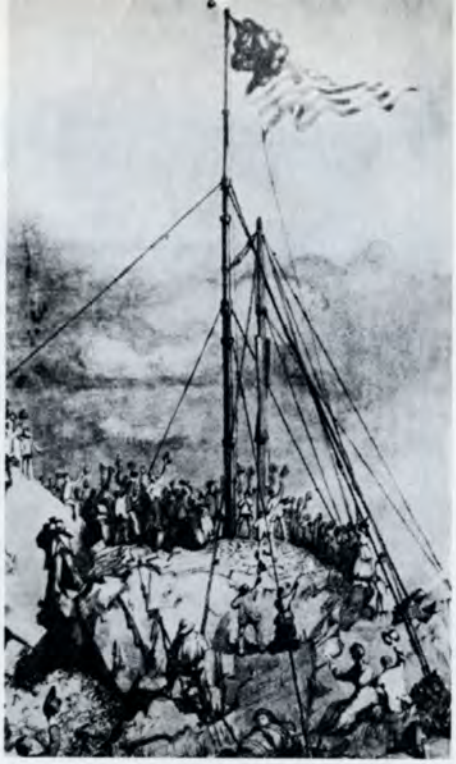
"It was one of the grandest sights ever witnessed by mortals."

When DeQuille had climbed above the snowstorm and onto the peak, he saw below him a vast, cottony sea in moonlight, a spectacular and eerie sight. We ascended in a cloudless daytime sky, but we also found a airy sea of sorts. And it too was an eerie spectacle, but hardly as pleasant. Over three-quarters of the great panorama from Davidson's summit, in the north, south, and east, hung a haze that was the color of wet sawdust. The horizons faded into it, and the view was like an old photograph, brownish and washed out.

We felt disappointed but not discouraged. We could still see 50 miles in those three directions: to the south, dimly was the Carson Valley and Gardnerville-Minden; to the east, Gold Hill and, much farther, Mark Twain Estates and, much farther yet, Pyramid Lake, just a blue blotch on the horizon; to the north, almost hidden by another peak, the upper Truckee Meadows and Reno. Civilization everywhere—even to the west, where houses clumped at the northern shores of Washoe Lake.

But the west! There the stunning magnificence that DeQuille described still stuns, for 20 miles away the Sierra rises up from Washoe Valley like a huge, jagged battlement, dwarfing the Virginia Range and Davidson.

No Sierra peak can rival Davidson as a curiosity, however; they are too high, too remote and too rugged. Familiar and accessible, Davidson has become almost an open-air museum, cluttered with human junk. We examined the flagpole first, since it has become the mountain's second most famous man-made feature after the sprawling towns below. From sturdy iron, now rusted and pitted like an old tin can, J & R Conway, Inc. of New York City forged the pole; A. Groat, W Wilkinson, George E. Emmett and John Pitchford —all of the Gold Hill Foundry— dragged it up the mountainside and planted it. At least, their names are cut with machine-like neatness into the pole's base.



A cannon booms from the peak as patriots cheer. The flagpole is still there.

Even if it wasn't the Gold Hill Foundry boys who performed this arduous patriotic feat, whoever did it wanted the pole to last, to be a permanent symbol for the most prosperous city in a young state. But they didn't count on the winds, which tore the iron pole in half not long after it was put up. Undaunted, the Comstockers strapped the two halves together. And so the pole still stands today, 50 feet high. Around it stands a small forest of antennae, weathering rapidly and beginning to bow stiffly down the slopes. And cemented to the granite crags are four brass benchmarks, "U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey/ Davidson 1951" (one has "1949"). It is all an odd and bewildering display.

But the peak offers a much greater wonder. Everywhere it displays the legends of previous climbers, cut, printed or scrawled on the rockface. There are names of sweethearts in red from 1977 and in black from 1965; "Chief Who?"; R. Farley, 1927; F. Deegan, 1893; and dozens of others, almost all unfamiliar, in letters faded and fading. Gary found the oldest announcement. Cut into a gray slab, it reveals with perfect tombstone style: Robert Rangeley, May 12, 1866. All the messages are basically the same, although a few cryptic remarks beyond simple names and dates exist. But we noticed one significant difference among them right away. The older the legend, the neater and bolder is its style and the likelier that it has been chiseled into the rock; the newer the legend, the freer is the handwriting and the more perishable the medium.

Without the junk and legends of humanity, the peak would still inspire wonder. The lime-green, chocolate-brown and black lichens on the rock; the hawk that glided past level to us; the hunched pine; the rubble everywhere on the slopes; the mountain's massy shadow below—it all seemed of a piece to us. Mount Davidson—not its panorama or its incidental evidence of man, but the mountain itself—has the kind of beauty which threatens, if ever so slightly, as it pleases, and mystifies.

"The altitude of the place is so great that, at any season, when clouds obscure the sun and shut out his rays, it rapidly becomes colder."

The mountain's shadow finally covered Virginia City at 5:30 in the evening. The wind, out of the south, grew stronger. But as the wind blew harder, the light softened. Washoe Lake five miles away turned silver. Faintly, in a sad whine from far below, the steam whistle of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad engine reached us. At 6:43 the sun was slipping down between two Sierra peaks like a burnished penny into a coin slot. The light began to fail fast, and we were cold.

But we delayed descending. As a kind of votive gesture, Gary had brought up a xeroxed copy of DeQuille's account. We read it and drank some wine in an attempt to warm ourselves. DeQuille noted that the mountain, originally known as Sun Peak, was named for Donald Davidson of San Francisco. Davidson, a mining agent, one day led an impromptu party of climbers to the summit, and later it was decided to rename the mountain in his honor.

Mount Davidson's huge aspect, we further read, has always troubled Virginia City residents, since it blinds them to a large portion of the sky. It blocks out the sun too, of course, and at Virginia City's altitude every little ray means a lot. Still, no one would seriously wish to be without Davidson. An insurmountable problem? According to DeQuille, one local inventor had a solution:

"In order to have the benefit of the sun in winter, until a late hour each day, a Washoe genius once proposed to run a large tunnel through the peak of Mount Davidson. Through this tunnel

he proposed to bring the light and heat of the sun after it had gone down behind the mountain. As he could not expect the sun to shine directly through the tunnel at all points in his course down to the western horizon, our inventor proposed to set at the western terminus of his tunnel a huge mirror, moved by clockwork, which would pour the rays of the sun in a constant stream throughout the tunnel."

The proposal apparently attracted wide approval but no cash.

"Taking a last lingering look at all about us we plunged down into the thick cloud-stratum, and, guided by the light of our lanterns, made the best of our way down the bed of a huge gorge and went back to the city."

It was almost dark when we started down. We had no lantern to light our way, only a pocket flashlight, and its beam was deathly pale. But we were feeling a little high from our Davidson experience and so charged down the slopes in the gathering darkness. We leapt from rock to rock, plunge-stepping through the scree, laughing madly from the 7,864-foot summit to Virginia City 1,664 feet below. Twenty minutes was all we needed in going down, and Mount Davidson was a dark pyramid behind us.

"Not one of the party will ever forget that total eclipse of the moon, seen from Mount Davidson's topmost height, nearly 8,000 feet above the level of the sea."

As the hardy DeQuille probably had done, we reminisced upon the climb in a C Street bar that evening. We had been more foolhardy than hardy and knew it. But I think we also knew then, for a while at least, as our muscles forgot the exertion and our bones the jolts and our lungs the burning of deep inspiration, why Davidson is so thoroughly, so religiously climbed.

The memory of that knowledge still pleases; it pleases because we came to realize later that through it we could share something with our Nevada forefathers after all: not their pioneering courage and ruggedness, nor even their careful wisdom, but the innocent, mysterious ability to enjoy incidents of landscape and occasion—*that* we can all still share. □

Roger Smith is a teaching fellow in English at UNR and co-editor with Gary Short of The Nevada Poet. *Smith is also a former Marine scout-diver* *(see page 82)*.

Twain, DeQuille & the Comstock Classics

If you're searching for the Virginia City of 1860, you'll find rich paying ground on the bookshelf. By Phillip Finch

To seek out the foundations of old Virginia City, to reach out for the coarse-textured fabric of perhaps the greatest of the West's great mining towns, is to find frustration. The Virginia that Mark Twain and John Mackay knew exists no longer. Time and the elements are hard on man's creations, especially in the uncompromising country at the edge of the Nevada desert. And Virginia never was built for the ages.

The most obvious relics are the brick buildings and the wooden houses that once were the core of a sprawling community of more than 25,000, complete with suburbs. But Twain or Mackay probably wouldn't recognize Virginia without the mining works that made the city what it was. Most have vanished by now, and the sad truth is that what remains on the side of Mount Davidson could have been lifted from almost any decaying town anywhere. That is no great loss, maybe, until you go looking for what made Virginia City special, what set it apart from the rest.

Begin to search in the obvious place and you'll discover that Virginia City of 1981 is the wrong place to go looking for Virginia City of 1860. The souvenir shops and the candy stores and the bars and the arcades are entertaining enough, but they don't survive on historical detail. The sites of the great mines have been nearly obliterated. Even if you find the spot on which the hoisting works for the Con Virginia once stood, there is little to distinguish it from the rest of the dust and the scrub. Having made that obligatory trek, you can continue your search on more promising (though less gaudy) ground—in a public library.

That should not be so surprising; what made Virginia special was not so much its physical grandeur as the determined, almost arrogant attitude of the people who created it and who kept it alive and thriving despite



Dan DeQuille, author of **The Big Bonanza**, *was a reporter for the* **Enterprise** *for 31 years.*



BANCROFT LIBRARY, U.C. BERKELEY

Sam Clemens became Mark Twain during his brief tenure on the **Territorial Enterprise** *in the early 1860s.*

immense adversity. Virginia City was most remarkable for existing where it did, for the blustering and vain pose that it struck, for the physical fortitude and technical genius that brought such wealth out of such a small pocket of the earth. All these survive today in books, documented by writers of the time and later by historians who gave the facts some historical perspective. There are still distressing blanks in the picture that never will be filled. Some details have been lost forever. But enough remains that library shelves are rich paying ground for the amateur historian or casual reader trying to find the real Virginia City.

There is only one book to read if you will read only one. That is *The Big Bonanza,* by Comstock journalist William Wright, who wrote under the pseudonym "Dan DeQuille." Much is made of Mark Twain's stint on Virginia City's *Territorial Enterprise.* The fact is, however, that DeQuille was for 31 years the most important newspaperman in a town noted for its irreverent, eccentric and competitive newspapering. DeQuille had enough of each of those qualities to make him the city's best-read journalist. But he was no crank. He was serious about his profession and he left behind a body of daily reporting that stands up to the most stringent journalistic standards.

He came to the Comstock in 1860, and two years later, as the first of the city's several booms was reaching its crest, he became a reporter for the *Enterprise.* He stayed until 1893, when the newspaper folded. DeQuille saw the city at its best and worst, understood it as well as anyone ever did, and loved it for what it was. Like most newspapermen, he mused about writing a book. When he produced *The Big Bonanza* in 1875, he produced a classic newspaperman's book built on fact and observation. Except for the passages dealing with the city's founding and the discovery of gold and silver in the late 1850s, the information is first-hand and lavishly detailed. The writing is sprightly and serviceable, and DeQuille dwells on topics that few others even touch. He knew the mines intimately and wrote of them at length.

But he seemed to understand, as well, that there was more to the town than the below-ground workings. He writes of Indian skirmishes; Chinese and Mexican laborers; the wood-cutting operations in the Sierra mountains which provided the mine engineers with timber to shore up uncertain



NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

During his much-traveled career, J. Ross Browne visited the Comstock twice in the 1860s for **Harper's.**

ground; badmen and bullies; Paiute Indians and their society as it confronted the white pioneers; stock speculations; mining swindles; saloons and stagecoaches.

This is DeQuille, describing Virginia City in 1862:

"As all the goods at that time were brought across the mountains by teams there often occurred most vexatious blockages in the streets. A jam of teams would take place (and) there would soon be seen a regular blockade. These blockades were of daily occurrence and sometimes lasted for hours. Teamsters waiting for the road to open grew hungry and, producing their lunchpails, sat on their wagons and ate dinner Cutting, shooting, and rows of every description became of much more frequent occurrence than at any time in the early days. The stages on all the roads leading to the city were very frequently robbed by masked men One driver was halted so often and became so well acquainted with the routine of the business that whenever he happened upon a man with a shotgun, he went down into the boot of his vehicle for the treasure-box."



On the road: Browne's self-portrait.

Nobody who claims to be serious about knowing Virginia City or Western America can skip this book.

DeQuille was a newspaperman of some repute when Sam Clemens was hired as a reporter on the *Enterprise* in 1862. Clemens' *nom de plume* would come in a few months, after he had established his own niche in the community with a wit and a fine sense of the absurd. His career on the *Enterprise* lasted less than two years, ending in 1864 when he was forced to leave town after one of the hoaxes with which he had amused himself and the readership nearly resulted in a gunfight. Seventeen years later Mark Twain wrote *Roughing It,* an account of his travels in the West and in Hawaii. Much of the book deals with his experiences as a prospector in the Esmeralda mining district and his internship at the *Enterprise.* He writes at the height of his skills and with what had become known as the Twain manner. Which is to say, with only a moderate respect for the facts, and none at all for the facts that stood in the way of a good story.

For all that, *Roughing It* is a valuable part of the literature of the Comstock. Twain's descriptions of the life of the Chinese in Virginia, of the stock mania that had the town in an almost constant grip, of the churlish badmen who frequented the city during those months, and of the life of a boom town newspaperman all ring true. He had an ear for dialect and a talent for reproducing it on paper, so his descriptions of the speech patterns and the language on the frontier are probably the most accurate of any.

Like Twain, J. Ross Browne was a humorist in the frontier style, indulging heavily in sarcasm one moment and subtle understatement the next. But Browne also was a skilled reporter, a seasoned traveler and enough of an expert on mining and geology to produce, in 1867, a voluminous report for the U.S. Treasury Department on the

mineral resources west of the Rocky Mountains. That report is arcane and of little use to popular historians now. But works that he produced in 1860 and 1863 as a correspondent for *Harper's* magazine still are widely quoted primary source materials for the place and the period.

A Peep At Washoe chronicled Browne's experiences as a traveler in the Sierra and western Nevada territory during 1860. This was the first year after the discovery of silver on the Comstock, a time for which documentation is spotty. Browne's article is one of the most useful firsthand accounts of Virginia at a time when most of its habitations were rough-sawed pine and canvas.

That alone would be valuable enough. But three years later Browne made a second trip to the Comstock. *Washoe Revisited* noted the changes that had occurred since 1860, and is famous for its account of a harrowing stagecoach ride over the Sierra, probably the best description of that trip ever put to paper. Other writers were totally captivated by the energy and the purpose they found on the Comstock. Browne was impressed, but he still looked with a skeptical eye at some of the excesses and absurdities that the city occasionally produced. In the second article, he wrote of the city's haphazard style of building:

"It now presents some of the distinguishing features of a metropolitan city. Large and substantial brick houses, three or four stories high, with ornamental fronts, have filled up most of the gaps, and many more are still in the process of erection. The oddity of the plan, and variety of its architecture—combining most of the styles known to the ancients, and some but little known to the moderns—give this famous city a grotesque, if not picturesque, appearance, which is rather increased upon a close inspection."

The works by DeQuille, Twain and Browne are unique because they are first-hand accounts of Virginia City at its rowdiest and most vibrant, written by men who knew the language and who saw these things as they happened. For the historian, this kind of material is most valuable, like an eye-witness's account of a traffic accident. Together with written records of the day, like newspapers and diaries and private letters, it supplies most of what we know about Virginia City and its mining industry. The dozens of books later written about the city all draw heavily on these original sources.

One of the best of the later works is *Comstock Miners and Mining*, a report to the U.S. Geological Survey completed by Eliot Lord in 1883, just as the Big Bonanza was dwindling. Most of the great mining operations still were active, so Lord was able to write firsthand about the industry's apex. His information about the earlier years is thorough—he had access to issues of the *Enterprise* and the Gold Hill *News* that are lost to us now—although secondhand.

The strongest point of the book may be its illustrations, the photographs of the city and the residents, of mine apparatus, engines and hoist-works that since have disappeared.

"The works by DeQuille, Twain and Browne are unique because they are firsthand accounts of Virginia at its rowdiest."

Lord relies heavily on statistics; the book includes a demographic breakdown of Washoe laborers, numerous tables of mine production, and even a table showing the quantities of nearly 200 consumer goods carried by the Virginia and Truckee Railroad to Virginia and Gold Hill in 1876 and 1879. The book's big weakness is its preoccupation with mining litigation. The legal hassles between the Ophir and the Burning Moscow mines probably meant as little to readers 98 years ago as they do today.

Because Virginia City was so important to the growth of the state of Nevada, Thompson and West's *History of Nevada* deals at length with the city's origins and development. This is a good sourcebook for anyone interested in the state's history up to 1881.

One of the most popular histories of the Comstock is *The Saga of the Comstock Lode*, by George Lyman, published in 1934. The book deals with the first four years of Virginia's existence. Because nearly 70 years had passed since the period he describes, Lyman's book is totally secondhand. It is done episodically, with copious footnotes. A later book by Lyman, *Ralston's Ring*, describes the power struggle between John Mackay and Bank of California interests headed by William Ralston and William Sharon.

That same subject is covered at length in Ethel Van Vick Tomes' *Rocket of the Comstock*, a biography of Mackay, the Irish immigrant who became one of the world's richest men and probably the most important figure in Virginia City's history.

Grant H. Smith's *History of the Comstock Lode 1850-1920* was issued as a University of Nevada bulletin in 1943. This thorough and accurate book contains the outstanding explanation of the geology of the area and the way Virginia's mining engineers exploited the riches they found there. But the book deals almost as well with what happened topside.

A few other works deserve mention, not as general histories of Virginia but as specialty items and curiosities that may interest you once you've digested DeQuille, Browne and Lord.

Directory of Nevada Territory 1862 is a recent photo-reproduction of the original business directory of Nevada, listing important citizens and businesses. It includes the original display advertisements from Virginia City merchants.

Silver Theatre by Margaret G. Watson recounts the entertainment available to Washoe residents between 1850 to 1864, from hurdy-gurdy halls to Shakespearean troupes.

James M. Cain became famous for modern crime novels like *Double Indemnity* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. In 1940, he visited Virginia City, and was impressed enough by what he saw to write *Beyond All Dishonor*, a novel about a young Confederate spy in Virginia City during the Civil War who falls in love with a prostitute. It isn't one of Cain's better-known books and is now something of a collector's item.

Having read about the real Virginia City, another trip to the town itself might be in order. The streets that you'll walk now will mean far more than they did. Besides, reading about a Washoe Zephyr is no substitute for actually feeling that afternoon blast of wind off the side of Mt. Davidson. The chill you'll feel on a January night is the same one that sent miners out of the darkness and into the warmth of a saloon.

A few things about Virginia City haven't changed at all. □



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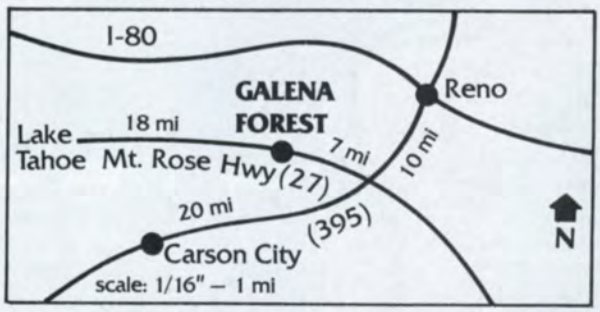
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L'Amour on the Lode

The best-selling western author returns on a press junket to the Comstock, the setting for his last blockbuster.

By Buddy Frank

For most writers, the day would have been a triumph. The kickoff of a promotional tour for a new book. But as Louis L'Amour stood there on the crumbling foundations of the Combination Hoist Works overlooking Virginia City, the day was something of an annoyance. Even though this was the setting of his latest work, the cold February wind reminded him why he'd long ago refused to make these publicity trips. (An option publishers afford writers with 115 million books in print.)

L'Amour has reached that rare literary niche where the only higher authority is the typewriter. Regardless of critic or comparison, his books sell. His fans are unshakable. It's a loyalty he returns by spending every day writing or in research. These press junkets were intrusions upon that special trust between writer and reader.

Trevallion felt curiously isolated from all about him. He was part of this, yet not part. What had been a barren mountainside was now a thriving mining town with the unceasing pound of stampmills and compressors, morning, noon and night.

But this was a special occasion. *Comstock Lode* was his most prodigious novel, the first in a saga, and one of his rare excursions into the hardbound marketplace. Thus he stood patiently as photographers and reporters from Carson City, Reno and the Comstock scrambled for the right f-stop and the perfect quote.

As he gazed across the canyon, a huge silver and turquoise bolo tugged at his neck. It hung there in almost fashion limbo; too flashy for Nevada, too dated for anywhere else. But apart from this single distinction, L'Amour blended into the background. He looked only 50 of his 73 years, yet lacked the flair associated with celebrity.

His greying hair is not silver; it's just greying. His face has character, but it's rugged, not handsome. And except for an autograph seeker alerted that he was in town, he walked unnoticed down the wooden sidewalks of C Street. At a luncheon break, a curious waitress, drawn by the television cameras, asked, "Who's that? You're kidding that's him, the writer?"

Indeed, at first it was difficult to appreciate what entitled this man to so many best sellers. He mulled through reporters' jabs on the value of paperback adventures with a cool and awkward detachment. And he talked of writing as a yeoman might. But when the topic swung to the western frontier, he came alive. His eyes sparkled, his voice rose, and the audience was transfixed. It was clear that above all, Louis L'Amour is a storyteller. And that his favorite story is of the Old West. And of mining.

He turned his thinking to the lode itself. Several of the mines looked very good. The Ophir, the Mexican, and others were showing large ore bodies, and the ore was the richest he had seen. The vein in the Ophir was sixty-five feet wide.

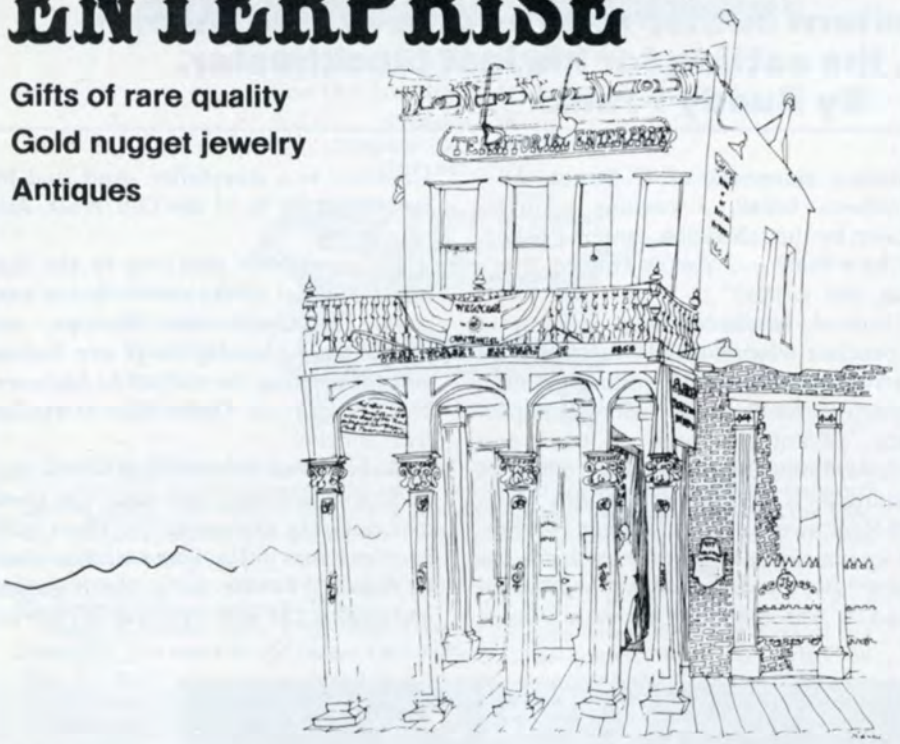
Nobody had ever worked a vein that wide, and nobody knew how. The earth was crumbly and unstable. There were constant rock falls. Some method must be found to handle the unstable ground and enable the miners to get out the ore



The world's most-read western novelist, Louis L'Amour, stopped by Virginia City in the late 1940s and posed before the window of the old post office on C Street. This year he paid another visit to the Comstock.

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in quantity. That such a method would be found he had no doubt.

You sense when L'Amour talks that he feels trapped in the wrong time and the wrong place. That he is a man who belonged alongside Patrick McLaughlin and Peter O'Riley as they stumbled upon the tip of the Comstock bonanza in the spring of 1859. He writes as if he were making entries in a diary instead of hunched over a typewriter in his suburban Los Angeles home.

It's easy to imagine him escaping reality by living in the make-believe world of fiction. But the paradox is that L'Amour's biography reads like a pulp novel: elephant trainer, longshoreman, tank destroyer officer in World War II, pro boxer (record: 51-8), lumberjack and screenwriter (31 movies). From his early days in the North Dakota mines to being shipwrecked in the West Indies, his writing talent developed in the tradition of Jack London and Ernest Hemingway. But still L'Amour seems drawn by the adventure of frontier America. With a smile he quotes, "The weak couldn't make it West, the cowards didn't try." He later remarks, "It was a land where men were men, and the women were glad of it!"

"The lady is with me," Trevallion said.

"'Lady'!" The man sneered. "Why she ain't no more a---"

Trevallion knocked him down. It was a backhanded blow, almost casual, but the man's heels flew up and he landed on his back in the mud, lips broken and bloody. He started to get up, but someone hissed, "Stay down you fool! That's Trevallion!"

There is another side to L'Amour's work. That of an undisciplined historian. One who yearns for scholarly respect, but can't accept the dues of hard fact. Instead, he uses his characters like pawns, moving them from place to place, time to time.

In *Comstock Lode,* he bestows Val Trevallion with the virtues of a dozen Virginia City notables. Trevallion has the mining sense of Ole Virginny, the business acumen of William Sharon, and the drive of Adolph Sutro. That he also hails, as many miners on the Lode did, from Cornwall, England, is no surprise.

Later she asked Trevallion, "Why do they call Cornishmen, 'Cousin Jacks'?"

"They say if you hire one Cornishman he will immediately tell you about his Cousin Jack, who is a good miner and hunting a job, and soon the Cousin Jacks have all the jobs."

Using this style, L'Amour has the freedom to make things come out right. Freedom to tie up loose ends. Only black-hatted bad guys in *Comstock Lode* buy undervalued stock in secretly-rich mines. And good guys like John Mackay (who L'Amour admires) would never stoop to such chicanery.

Alas, real life is seldom so ordered. Stock manipulation was a way of life in the silver business. Even noble Mr. Mackay wrestled control of the Hale & Norcross Mine with just such a sleight.

Yet, L'Amour can easily be forgiven these tiny excesses. The work succeeds in capturing the flavor of the place in a way that's sure to outlast any critics.

From his hillside he could look down upon much of the town and see it scattered along the streets, if such they could be called. Snow turned white the hills, and the Washoe zephyrs filled the air with it, moaning about the eaves of the cabin and prying with ghostly fingers to find a way to the warmth inside.

It's unlikely that *Comstock Mining and Miners* written by Eliot Lord in 1883 will ever be replaced as a definitive history of the life on the Lode. But this new work may be entitled to share the distinction of accurately portraying that early period. Sadly, the popular image of the Comstock's heyday derives from television's *Bonanza* rather than the eyewitness accounts and careful research of Lord. The myth persists of the Cartwright boys whisking in from a quick trip from Tahoe, strolling the broad and level streets of Virginia City.

Comstock Lode could set things right. With classics like *Hondo, How The West Was Won* and *The Sacketts* to his credit, L'Amour will introduce millions of loyal readers to a decent portrayal of Nevada's heritage.

So with a *Good Morning America* interview still to go, L'Amour concluded his press stop in Virginia City. Left shivering on the barren hillside by one too many photo requests, he whispered to an aide, "Remind me never to come here again in the winter."

The air was growing colder, the sky was bleak. It was coming on to snow. "Probably much like they say," he commented at last. "When I was there, no Virginia City existed and nobody had heard of a Comstock Lode, if there is such a thing. There were some raw, ragged hills, some sagebrush, stunted cedar, and winds that didn't blow dust, they blew rocks!"

Buddy Frank is News Producer at KTVN-TV in Reno and a longtime Nevada history nut.

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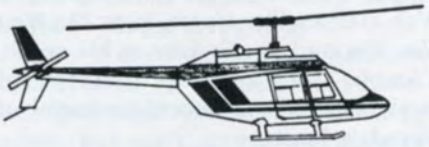
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Shoot Out At Montello

One night in 1883 a gang of train robbers wanted to take the money and run, but they hadn't counted on meeting Aaron Ross. By Craig MacDonald



WELLS FARGO PHOTO

In his fifties, Aaron Ross was one of the most capable guards employed by Wells Fargo & Co. in Nevada during the 1880s. By successfully preventing several stagecoach and train robberies, the modest 6-foot-4, 250-pounder had earned a reputation as a guard to be feared and avoided.

Still, there were those stubborn outlaws who kept trying to get an edge on the aging rifleman. So it was on a cold winter night when a group of bandits challenged Ross in a classic battle—and discovered his reputation was right on the mark.

At midnight on January 23, 1883, Ross was awakened from a sound sleep in the express car of Central Pacific Railroad's Number One by a violent pounding on the door. The eastbound train, carrying $60,000 in coin from Reno to Ogden, Utah, had come to an unexpected stop outside the northeastern Nevada town of Montello. A red lantern in the middle of the tracks had brought the powerful train to a stop.

Ross opened the heavy express door to see what all the commotion was about. Standing below him was a tough-looking man with a raised handgun. The stranger curtly told Ross that the train was being held up and ordered him to hop out or suffer the consequences.

"I've got to put my boots on first," Ross told the bandit. With that, he slammed the door shut and began barricading the car by stacking furniture, trunks and boxes against the door.

"Ain't you coming out?" bellowed the outlaw impatiently.

"No, I've changed my mind," Ross answered.

"Then we're going to bring you out!" the desperado yelled and began firing into the car.

Ross returned the fire at his unseen enemy. Soon after the exchange started, the guard was shot in the right hand, but he kept shooting until, suddenly, there was stone silence.

Next, he heard the express car being uncoupled and the rest of the train slowly moved up the track. Then several of the bandits lined up on one side of the car and opened fire. Two shots ripped through the guard's hip, yet he kept firing back. The gunfire knocked down the express car lamp, and Ross scrambled over to stamp out the small fire it had created.

Seeing the smoke gave the train robbers an idea. Two of them gathered some brush and placed it under one end of the car in an attempt to burn or at least smoke out their stubborn adversary. But the brush failed to ignite the car, and both arsonists probably were shot by Ross, who was pulling the trigger at every sound he heard.

For a couple of minutes all was quiet. Then the outlaws ordered the engineer to back the train into the express car. The collision knocked the doors open, but Ross managed to close them before the robbers could climb in. Outside, the frustrated men tried to smash one of the doors with a pick, but Ross held them off with gunfire.

Amidst the exchange, the express car's doors slammed open. On instinct, Ross lunged at the doors, closing one but slipping as he tried to reach the other. He glanced up to see one bandit stepping into the car four feet from him. Ross slid forward, raised his right boot and kicked the outlaw so hard in the stomach that the intruder flew back into the snow.

The battle, which was more than four hours old, came to an end when the robbers apparently heard horses or another train approaching. They grabbed their mounts and hightailed it to the east. *(Continued on next page)*

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Soon afterwards a squad of soldiers from Montello came to the rescue. While the soldiers pursued the escaping robbers, a military doctor treated the seriously injured, semi-conscious Ross, who was reported to be "bedewed with blood but still full of fight."

After resting a few days at Montello, the 53-year-old guard was transported to San Francisco where he was given a hero's welcome by Wells Fargo and Central Pacific officials as well as citizens who had heard about the incredible episode in Nevada. Wells Fargo presented Ross with a $1,000 check and a $650 gold watch with an inscription commending his courage. That spring his wife presented him with a baby girl, who they named Montello in honor of the occasion.

Five of the outlaws were captured near the Great Salt Lake, one was killed by Ross and another escaped. Of the five arrested, three received 12-year sentences and two got 10-year terms at Nevada State Penitentiary.

Ironically, Ross later reported that two of the gang members became "pretty well fixed," following their prison sentences. "They got into mining and oil in Utah and made a stake," Ross told a Wells Fargo official in 1916. He had learned of their change in fortune after one of his sons went to southern Utah to purchase some mining stock, and the sellers turned out to be two of the former bandits. Ross' son returned home, afraid for his life.

"I told him to go back and tell them who I was," Ross recalled. His son returned, told the men about his father and bought the claim without incident. "They asked how I was and all about me," Ross reported. "One of them said, 'If you are as tough as the old man, we don't care to have anything to do with you!'"

The elder Ross continued being a Wells Fargo guard on trains through Nevada. Even after he retired in 1894, Ross still rode in baggage and express cars on occasion. He remained a consultant to Wells Fargo until his death at age 93 on April 3, 1922.

At his funeral, a Wells Fargo official recounted the guard's famous confrontation at Montello and concluded that Ross was not only brave and modest but "true as tested steel." The train robbers would have agreed. □

Craig MacDonald, a former San Diego Union *reporter, is a freelance writer and press relations advisor to Pacific Telephone in Southern California.*

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Invasion of the Booty Snatchers

Is Nevada being taken over by aliens from Atlantic City? Here's how to find out. By William Jeanes



Given the recent observance of Nevada's first 50 years as a gambling state, you'd think we wouldn't have to be overly concerned about legal gaming in a faraway city whose chief claims to fame are having the Monopoly board named after its streets and a big sidewalk made out of lumber. After all, we've been playing Monopoly with real money out here since before statehood, and have long since considered wooden sidewalks a minor attraction. That notwithstanding, the emergence of Atlantic City as a gaming center poses threats which, left unchecked, could tarnish the sterling image of the Silver State.

In Atlantic City, which once shared the appellation "City of the Living Dead" with Cleveland and Philadelphia, an alert field study group from the University of Nevada's semi-secret Department of Plague Prevention reports spotting a new strain of gambler developing in the so-called Garden State. No less an authority than Dr. Homer C. Loomis, Emeritus Professor of Fear and Loathing, maintains publicly that Nevada casinos stand in mortal danger from a possible incursion of New Jerseyites with a surface resemblance to real gamblers.

"These beings do at least two things that decent gamblers do," warns Dr. Loomis. "They buy chips and crowd around the tables. But the resemblance more or less stops there and an informed public can spot them and halt this scourge before it can take hold and ruin us all."

Working with eminent Nevada sociologist Arnold Farber, a specialist in the physical characteristics of the lower orders, Dr. Loomis has pinpointed a number of ways in which the alert casino-goer can spot a gambler from New Jersey. Farber, whose scholarly "I'm O.K., You're Not" has helped millions of diners deal with surly waiters, is credited by Dr. Loomis with being the first academician to observe that New Jersey punters are prone to sidle.

"If a man or woman *sidles* up to a blackjack table," wrote Farber in a 1979 letter to Dr. Loomis, "there's every chance he's from New Jersey and an even bigger chance that he's going to screw up the game somehow." Sidling, a crabwise approach usually accompanied by a shifty demeanor, therefore becomes an important criterion in helping players to indentify persons from Atlantic City.

"You've got to remember that those people back there are part of the bunch that ran off Bert Parks," says Loomis. "And any crowd that would do that to a decent American like him would do anything. It's no damn wonder they tend to sidle."

Another obvious point of difference concerns the overall physical appearance, according to the Loomis Report, which reads in part: "New Jerseyites, perhaps due to the overwhelming pollution of their cities—and of nearby New York—have a pallor that could be achieved by a Nevadan only if he or she spent three weeks underwater. They are also stooped, a condition stemming from years of walking littered streets looking for small change." Thus, a person who is pale and stooped must be considered suspect. And a person who is pale, stooped, *and* in the act of sidling, bears constant watching.

Dr. Loomis is quick to point out that oldest danger of research: the Excep-



'You've got to remember that those people are part of the bunch that ran off Bert Parks.'

tion that Proves the Rule. "Many of these persons are not pale at all," he cautions, "particularly the female of the species. Summoned by names like Bertha, Maude, Sylvia, Gloria, and Marcia, they exhibit visages that could only have been designed by the brothers Ringling. Topped by wigs, curlers, or—in extreme cases—sun helmets, these apparitions can nonetheless be identified with ease.

"Listen to the voice first. If it bears a strong kinship to that of an enraged parrot, you've probably got a woman from the Atlantic City casinos on your hands. There might also be sunglasses with sequins or rhinestones, and there will surely be disco pants or designer jeans that are patently unequal to their assigned task. God knows what you'll see on their feet. I never got that far." Despite his accuracy and candor, there seems no denying Dr. Loomis's heartfelt dejection.

The Loomis Report goes on to note the dress of the male partner of this dread Army of the Benighted. "He shows an absolute addiction to synthetic fabrics," says Loomis. "An all-polyester outfit is not uncommon during the winter months. Typical is a maroon-and-white houndstooth pattern sport coat surmounting solid maroon trousers with little snag balls all over them, accessorized with a shirt that looks to be stolen from a pair of pajamas and held together with a tie that could have been the inspiration for the wallpaper in a cheap carpet outlet. The shoes and belt will be patent leather and of the same color—usually white, whatever the month."

In the warm months, the New Jerseyite can also be spotted by his attire. Baseball caps are often worn right into the casino, and Bermuda shorts are common, set off by black lace-up shoes and short synthetic black socks. A colorful, if grimy, T-shirt may be in evidence, bearing a clever admonition such as "Diesel mechanics have bigger tools." Sometimes the messages are even funnier, Loomis admits.

Whereas the female under discussion here is loud and abrasive, the vocal habits of the male—particularly if he is an accompanied husband—are surprisingly subdued. None of the exuberant cheerfulness that characterizes Nevadans penetrates the sullen demeanor of the New Jerseyite. He will grumble at every turn of the card, call of the keno number, or roll of the dice. But not loudly. He hasn't the self-confidence for that, which is only proper. If you were pale, stooped, poorly dressed and got to where you were standing by sidling, you'd probably act a little insecure yourself.

"A lot of this insecurity is caused by jellyfish," says Dr. Loomis, not without a touch of irony. "These people who grew up on the shore back east have spent their lives trying not to get stung by a Portugese Man-O-War which is why they never go in the water. Out here, we don't have all that much water and no dangerous jellyfish at all. We have real he-man stuff to be frightened of like rattlers and Gila monsters and getting lost in the desert."

This insecurity problem, as you would expect, carries over in spades to the actual gambling methods employed by these misfits. Those of their number who are mentally able to progress beyond the slots and keno will inevitably lose what little funds they brought along. "And the funds are indeed small," says Loomis. "Most of them figure that a hundred bucks is a big stake and they probably amassed that by not making the payment on their aluminum siding that month."

Some experts have expressed the opinion that New Jersey gamblers don't really go to casinos to gamble in the first place. "Casinos are the same thing to these punters as the Emerald City was to the Tin Man," says Loomis, "an unrealistic end of the rainbow that they expect to solve all their troubles. And maybe it would, if they'd learn how to bet." Loomis goes on to cite a research paper which documented an astounding 789 consecutive instances in which New Jersey blackjack players hit 17 when the dealer had a five showing. "How in the world are you going to win if you carry on like that?" Loomis asks acidly.

Buttressing the opinions that New Jerseyites are actually seeking rewards other than monetary is an astonishing admission by the Director of Food & Beverage Services at an Atlantic City casino, who recently owned up to serving over 15,000 a la carte meals in one day. "I ask you," says Loomis, "did those people go there to play or did they go there to eat?

"And while we're on this outrage of eating when you ought to be learning how insurance bets can change your life," Loomis snorts, "did you know there's a restaurant in one of those New Jersey places that's called 'By the Sea?' And do you know what it overlooks? A *parking lot.*"

The question arises about what to do if confronted with one of these invaders if you are a decent, odds-fearing Nevadan. The simplest ploys are these, developed by Arnold Farber and Dr. Loomis:

If a New Jersey person appears at your table, the quickest remedy is to whisper conspiratorily to the interloper that the game is rigged and you work for the Gaming Commission. Ask if he would be willing to testify. He will evaporate. Another sure-fire method is to tell him, particularly if his wife is within hearing, that Frank Sinatra is giving a free show at the casino next door. Tell him nobody knows about it yet and tickets are therefore available. Liberace or Lawrence Welk may be even better for this use.

If the outlanders persist, begin snickering and rolling your eyes every time they place a bet. They will either become intimidated and depart, or else leave because they think you are unbalanced and potentially dangerous. A feigned tic and the occasional evil chuckle will speed things along.

Another unfailing device is to ask if they saw Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor over at the craps table. You may be injured slightly in the resulting getaway, but it will be worth it.

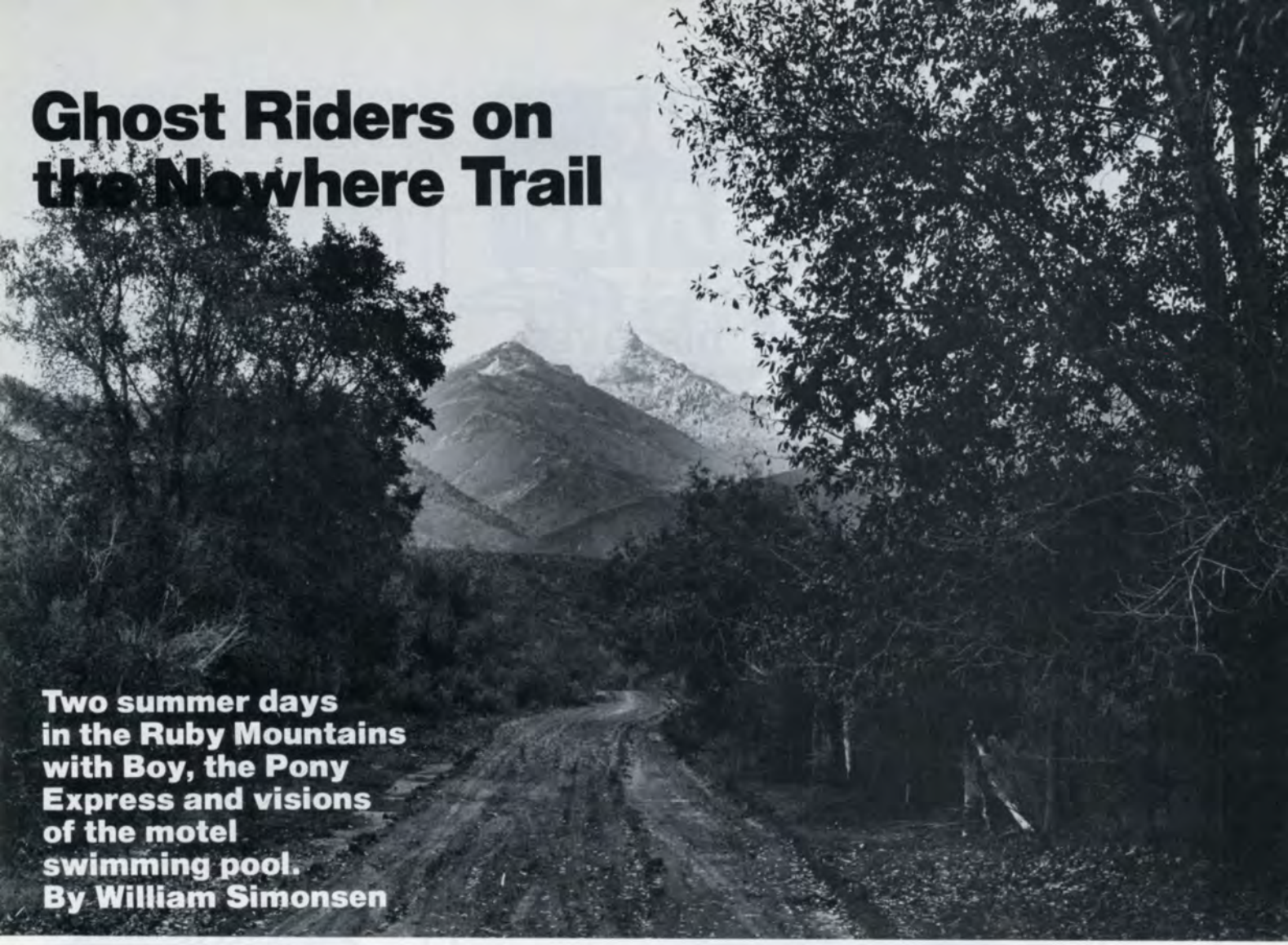
Another, less advisable move involves whispering to the husband (where a pair of aliens has appeared) while pointing at the wife, something on the order of, "Not bad. I'll bet that set you back fifty bucks." If the man has done even a modicum of homework, he will know that starting fights in casinos can cause grief and will just leave. The suicidal ones among them can, however, bring grief to everyone, including you. So reserve this for the most extreme cases.

But the most effective, and by far the most satisfying, is to simply clap the Garden Stater on the back and say, "Howdy friend, I'm from Nevada. Where do you come from?" Then, smiling down from your tanned and healthy height, offer to shake his hand. Overcome with embarrassment at the need to identify his homeland, and fearful that you will damage his quivering hand, he will duck his head and sidle out of your life forever.

"A cruel solution, to be sure," says Dr. Loomis reflectively, "but this is a problem that calls for harsh measures." □

William Jeanes last reported on the benefits of Nevada seceding from the union (May/June '80).

Ghost Riders on the Nowhere Trail



Two summer days in the Ruby Mountains with Boy, the Pony Express and visions of the motel swimming pool.
By William Simonsen

As we're driving to the trailhead, I try to imagine a scene more forbidding than this. I am unsuccessful. This is a huge nowhere. There are no somewheres anywhere around here. This is where the somewheres end and the nowheres begin. This is where John C. Fremont discovered a great river that doesn't flow anyplace. It flows along like a normal river for a while, then vanishes. Sinks into the earth. We head for the mountain range up ahead.

I imagine I see dust clouds from wagon trains out on the flats to the east. Ever so slowly hurrying to get to California before it was too late and the golden goose was already cooked and the scraps fed to the dogs. The range we're headed into is one of the main reasons the Donner Party was so late in getting to the Sierra. They got lost in the Ruby Mountains of Nevada. We're to backpack the old stagecoach road and old Pony Express route, Overland Pass. The way the Donner Party was *supposed* to be going. The *only* way over.

We come to the end of the portion of road we are attempting to navigate in our pick-up and pronounce it beginning of the trail. We take off up the road and intend to meet her on the other side as far as she can drive up from that direction. It still looks like a road at this point; it will begin to look more like a trail quickly. Me and Boy walk. (Our conversation and formality are left at the truck. He is Boy. I am either Hey or Hey You, depending on his distance from me. Names are shed with the city clothes. Grunt communication is assumed with the dirt .)

Halfway through the afternoon, Boy begins to tell me stories of what his mother must be doing by now. His visions range from lying in a cool swimming pool to gambling in a cool air-conditioned casino to lying on the cool sheets of a cool air-conditioned motel room. Every adjective he uses is the word "cool." I quietly kick rocks at Boy. He stops his tirade. We take a break. The sun must be affecting my sense of humor.

Later, as we climb higher, we see snow on the north facing slopes and in the cracks, protected from the sun. We play in the snow for a while, and in the end stick our heads into the snow banks to cool them. (This was to be the beginning of a very strange experience. After traveling on foot all over North America, in all seasons, in all climates, I had finally overloaded my nervous system. This foolhardy sudden cooling of my brain caused me to suffer extraordinary hallucinations for the rest of the trip. Boy wasn't disturbed by the experience until the next day, but that's the rest of the story.)

We feel refreshed from the stop and start up the trail again. From behind an outcrop several hundred yards ahead appears a rider on horseback. As he gets closer, I see that he is a young lad. He lays the leather on the horse and gallops closer and closer without any decrease in speed. I watch as he rides down upon us. I jump out of his path at the last moment, yelling a warning at Boy. Boy stands in the middle of the road. He is miraculously missed by the horse. Boy doesn't even flinch as the horse and rider fly by inches away.

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They disappear around the next curve. He does, however, comment on my dodging exercise. I try to explain what I've just seen, but give up and suggest a break at the trees ahead. We stumble on. Flop out under the cottonwoods. I lean back and allow my mind to regroup.

Late afternoon. We spend an hour looking for Cracker Johnson Spring Number One. That's the name on the map. Sure enough, we find it way up a dry wash, at the top of the pass. We never find Cracker Johnson Spring Number Two (also on the map), but we find a nice place to camp. Boy claims he can see old stagecoach and covered wagon tracks on the road. As we're cooking dinner he stands up suddenly and, with eyes wide, watches *something* travel up the road. Something I can't see. He doesn't mention anything, but is embarrassed to find me watching him. I enjoy observing him the rest of the evening as he spooks at the slightest sounds and glances frequently over his shoulder. I'm not the only one seeing visions. I tell him my stalest ghost stories. After eating two full dinners-for-four we explore the campsite. There are old fire marks scattered all over the small ravine, left from the time when the spring was a spring. We speculate about their origin. The Donner Party?

Downhill all the way out. I watch from the shade of my luncheon tree as the Pony Express rider goes through about noon. I don't mention it. After lunch, Boy makes a long involved speech about "the curious ruts in the road." His explanation involves stagecoaches and covered wagons. I try to explain that there is not yet enough science to classify fossil ruts. He founds a new branch of science on the way to the truck, which we find near the place we guessed. It is empty.

We wait at the deserted truck in the broiling desert. In about an hour she appears from behind a large boulder, bikini clad, dripping suntan oil. Didn't hear us arrive. Thought she heard some horses go by and got up to investigate. (The haunted trail claims yet another victim.) Me and Boy exchange knowing glances.

She tells us about the swimming pool and the air-conditioned room at the motel. I turn the truck around so she can drive us into town. □

William Simonsen is an outdoor and short fiction writer who lives in a Montana rain forest 30 miles from nowhere.

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Summer in Bloom

Early summer brings new color to Nevada's high deserts. In the land of sagebrush, wildflowers suddenly appear in patches of bright yellows, reds and subtle pastel shades in the valleys and mountains, signaling the arrival of warm, sun-filled days.

Here photographer Linda Dufurrena focuses on some of the colorful native flora in the rugged mesa country of Humboldt County



Wild Peach

Sunflowers



Indian Paintbrush



Wild Thistle

By Ann Henderson and Joan Morrow

150 Good Times & Great Events in July & August

SOUTH

ONGOING EVENTS

Las Vegas Mormon Fort Tours, Tues.-Sun.
Historic and Cultural Focus Tours, Las Vegas, 382-7198
Historic artifacts on display, Southern Nevada Museum, Henderson, and UNLV Museum of Natural History, Las Vegas

JULY

Art Exhibit, thru 7/24, Charlotte Baklanoff, Charleston Heights Library, Las Vegas
Boulder City 4th of July, parade 10am, food booth, softball games, contests, band and fireworks at dusk, City Park
Caliente 4th of July, 3-5: men's softball tournament; 4-5: firemen's breakfast 6-9am; 4: parade 10am, evening fireworks, City Park; 5: Clover Creek Grand Prix motorcycle race through town
Henderson 4th of July, fireworks at Morrell Park
Las Vegas 4th of July, family picnic with kids' games, bluegrass music, county tug-o-war championships, food booths, 10am-4pm; coed volleyball and frisbie golf tournaments begin 8am; all events at Sunset Park except evening fireworks at the Silver Bowl
Town & Country Flea Market, 4-5, Convention Center, Las Vegas
"Godspell," 7-8/1, musical, Meadows Playhouse, Las Vegas
"Grease," 9-12, 16-19, Judy Bayley Theatre, 8pm, UNLV, Las Vegas
"Carousel," 9-11, musical by Las Vegas Community Theater, 8pm, Spring Mt. Ranch State Park
Merv Griffin Show Taping, 10-14, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas
Gem Club, 13, Reed Whipple Cultural Center, 7:30pm, Las Vegas
"Carousel," 16-18, musical by Las Vegas Community Theater, 8pm, Spring Mt. Ranch State Park
Flea Market, 18-19, Convention Center, Las Vegas
"Carousel," 23-25, musical by Las Vegas Community Theater, 8pm, Spring Mt. Ranch State Park



Nevada's events, shows and celebrations are listed by region as a speedy reference for weekend trips and vacations.

20 FAIRS & FESTIVALS

LAS VEGAS BLUEGRASS

ELY HORSE RACES

YERINGTON FROG JUMPING

WALKER LAKE RACERS

RENO PRO BASEBALL

BASQUE STRONGMEN

VIRGINIA CITY MUSTER

COW PASTURE BOXING

WINNEMUCCA RODEO

Pioneer Day, 25, chuck wagon breakfast 6-8am, followed by kids' games, parade & 6pm BBQ, Panaca
Hopi Childrens' Art, 26-8/21, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas
Art Exhibit, 26-8/21, Doug Taylor, Charleston Heights Library, Las Vegas
Pan Tournament, 26-28, Union Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas
Shrine Circus, 31-8/2, Convention Center, Las Vegas

AUGUST

World Wide Flea Market, 1-2, Convention Center, Las Vegas
Merv Griffin Show Taping, 10-14, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas
Lincoln County Fair, 12-15, high school, Panaca. 12: 4-H fashion show 7pm; 13: 4-H events all day; 14: horseshoe contest 5pm, street dance 10pm; 15: motorcycle races 8am, gymkhana 10am, parade 10pm; fair exhibits on 14 from 3-8pm and 15 from 10am-5pm; rodeo on 14 and 15, 8pm
Youth Fair, 14-15, 4-H entries & exhibits, Boulevard Shopping Center, Las Vegas
International Folk Dances, 14-15, Spring Mt. Ranch State Park, 8pm
Folk Music, 21-22, Spring Mt. Ranch State Park, 8pm
New York Philharmonic, 27 Ham Hall, 8pm, UNLV, Las Vegas
Miss Pahrump Pageant, 28, Pahrump Community Center, 7:30pm

Spring Mountain Musicals

If you're looking for a cool spot to escape the summer heat in Las Vegas, Spring Mountain Ranch State Park is 2,000 feet higher than the city and 10 to 15 degrees cooler. Another attraction is the park's festival program, which includes the musical "Carousel," folk dancing, and bluegrass and Dixieland music during July and August. At seven other Nevada state parks this summer you can enjoy historic tours, campfire shows, a moonlight walk to learn about Indian legends, photography walks and evening stargazing. All park programs are suitable for picnicking.

THE BUOYS OF SUMMER

When Jack Roark eases into his raceboat on July 12 to start the Walker Lake 100, the 46-year-old Hawthorne man will have a lot going for him, and a lot at stake.

For one thing, he's the national Endurance Tunnel high-points champion of the American Power Boat Association. He has had that honor since 1978—roughly equivalent to winning baseball's Most Valuable Player award for three consecutive seasons. To win an unprecedented fourth title, he'll be pitting his driving skill and his Walker Lake Special against the hottest ET boats and drivers in the country.

He'll also be defending the Walker 100 championship he won last year in a screaming duel with arch-rival Art Williams of Long Beach, California. For 23 of the race's 33 laps, the two traded the lead back and forth, Williams going in front on the straightaways and the wily Roark passing him on the turns. Typical of endurance racing, the outcome was decided by mechanical failure when Williams' propeller lost a blade to the constant pounding of the water, and Roark went on to win easily.

Roark's chosen racing class, the ET, is one of the sport's most challenging and exciting. An "endurance tunnel" craft is designed for long distance racing with a hull shaped like an inverted U. At high speed—these racers can reach 130 mph—the boat is cushioned by the air trapped underneath.

It's an expensive sport, too. The boat alone can run $30,000, and costs of tow vehicle, trailer, travel and maintenance over the 10-month season push the total even higher. Most owners consider themselves lucky if they recover expenses with prize money. Roark agrees, paraphrasing Mark Twain, "A boat is a hole in the water into which you pour money."



DEAN OWEN

Jack Roark in his blue-ribbon boat, the Walker Lake Special.

Born in Reno and reared in Hawthorne, Roark began his love affair with boat racing in 1962. That year he and his wife Gladys put their life savings into 200 acres of rocky land 12 miles north of Hawthorne on the lake's west side. Today about 50 families live in the area. But in the beginning, Roark says, "It was just me and Gladys and the lake. We used to waterski on it when we weren't workin' Then one day we saw our first boat race in Idaho, and I was hooked.

"So we just cut the ski rope," he grins, "and I took off by myself in the boat."

Roark was not an overnight success. High performance boat drivers, like wine, it seems, must go through an aging process to reach their full potential. It wasn't until 1971 that he won his first race, driving an 18-foot flatbottom boat at the first race sponsored by the Walker Lake Boat and Ski Club, a group of local enthusiasts he had helped organize. His boat was named the Walker Lake Special. All of his boats since then have had that name, partly for nostalgic reasons but mostly to advertise the lake and its water sports.

Roark moved into the new ET class the next year and began to win his share of prize money. Then he purchased his ET-1 in 1978 and won his first points championship. He's been the man to catch ever since.

—Dean Owen

The Walker Lake 100 Marathon is Sunday July 12 at Cliff House Marina, 12 miles north of Hawthorne. On Saturday boat fans can watch drivers take practice runs. The Sunday races begin about noon with the 100-mile outboard race, and inboards (Roark's class) start about 2 p.m. A "small donation" may be requested at the entrance. The marina has a restaurant, bar and motel, and you can camp at Sportsman's Beach and Tamarack Point a few miles north.

CENTRAL

JULY

Austin 4th of July, parade 9am, street events on Main Street, and dance 9pm, firehouse, info. 964-2341

Eureka 4th of July, street events 10am, and fireworks 9pm, info. 237-5236

Ely 4th of July, parade 11am, games 1pm at Broadbent Park, demolition derby 1pm fairgrounds, fireworks at dusk, info. 289-4422

Hare Scramble, 4, 150-mile dirt bike race, 17 classes for amateur riders, 10:30am, rodeo grounds, Austin

Antique Car Show, 10-12, Ely

Ely Basque Festival, 18-19. 18: weightlifting and woodchopping contests, native dances 5pm at fairgrounds, dance 9pm at National Guard Armory; 19: Mass 10:30am followed by BBQ at Berry Creek Grove, 25 miles north of Ely; admission to BBQ by advance tickets only, info. 289-2218

Casino Amateur Golf Tournament, 18-19, Ely, info. 289-8778

VFW Rodeo, 25-26, rodeo grounds, 1pm, Eureka

AUGUST

White Pine Horse Show, 1-2, fairgrounds, Ely

Rocky Mt. Regional Women's Softball Tournament, 14-16, Broadbent Park, Ely

Kingston Firemen's Competition, 15, firemen's contests start 10am, BBQ 2pm, dance 8pm, flea



C.J. HADLEY

Making a Splash in Dayton

The dunk-a-punk show imported from Fernley is always a refreshing spot during Dayton's Santa Maria Day. The August 15th celebration includes a parade, games, waterfights and dancing in the street.

market all day, Kingston, 27 miles southeast of Austin on Rt. 8A-376, infor. 964-2480

Pony Express Days, 22-23, horse racing, fairgrounds, Ely

White Pine County Fair and Pony Express Days, 29-30, horse racing, exhibits, livestock judging, food booths, demonstrations, fairgrounds, Ely



C.J. HADLEY

Basque Bread Winners

The outdoor bread baking contest is one of the special events that make Nevada's Basque festivals famous. The competition is judged by experts—the former sheepherders. You can also enjoy Old Country dancing, incredible feats of strength, and great times at this summer's festivals in Elko on July 4-5, Ely on July 18-19 and Reno on August 8.

NORTH

ONGOING EVENTS

Northeastern Nevada Museum, 9-7 Mon.-Sat., 1-7 Sun., historical and natural history exhibits, 1515 Idaho St., Elko, 738-3418

JULY

Handmade Quilt Display, 1-8/2, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Elko

50th Anniversary of Gambling, 1-31, Nevada Magazine touring exhibit, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Elko

Battle Mountain 4th of July, parade, BBQ, games, dance and fireworks, Lion's Club Park

Jackpot 4th of July, kids' games and contests, 4pm, Cactus Pete's Casino

Wildhorse 4th of July, lamb BBQ, Wildhorse Ranch & Resort, info. Northfork 6471

Elko Basque Festival, 4-5. 4: parade 11am followed by contests of strength and skill at fairgrounds, dance 9pm at Elko Basque Club; 5: outdoor Mass 11am followed by BBQ and contests at City Park

Western States Hollering Contest, 5, Jackpot, 1pm, info. 755-2259

Northeastern Nevada Quarterhorse Assn. Show, 10-12, fairgrounds, Elko

Cactus Pete's Air Race, 16, from Orland, CA. to Jackpot

Jackpot Boat Clinic and Water Carnival, 25-26, Salmon Falls Dam, info. 755-2259

AUGUST

Cactus Pete's Air Race, 1, from Portland to Jackpot

Photography Exhibit, 4-9/2, gambling photographs by Jan Aphelin, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Elko

4-H Horse Show, 31, fairgrounds, Elko

WEST

ONGOING EVENTS

Dayton Flea Market, weekends

Nevada State Museum, 8:30-4:30 daily, special 50 years of gaming exhibit, Carson City

Nevada Artists Assn. Gallery, 10-4 Mon.-Sat., 449 W. King St., Carson City

Art exhibitions, 2-6 Wed.-Mon., 599 D St., St. Phillip's Center Gallery, Hawthorne

Atmospherium-Planetarium, open daily, UNR, Reno, show info. 784-4811

Photographs & Memories, 9-5 Mon.-Sat., noon-5 Sun., Churchill County Museum, Fallon

Art Exhibit, Reno Tahoe Visitors Center, 135 N. Sierra, 10-2 Tues.-Sat., Reno

Nature Talks, 1pm Fridays, Sand Harbor, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park

Historic Artifacts, Lyon County Museum, 10-4 Sat., 1-4 Sun., Yerington

JULY

Art Show, thru 7/15, Genoa Courthouse Museum

Reno Padres vs. Redwood Pioneers, 2-4, Class



Under a Barrel

Austin and Kingston volunteers will try to wash the barrel over each other at their annual match August 15 at Kingston. Silver City's team, above, will get wet the same day in Dayton.

A pro baseball, 7:30pm, Moana Stadium, Reno

Sharkey's Annual Cowpasture Boxing Festival, 3, Gardnerville ballpark, 7pm

"The Drunkard," 3-4, melodrama, Genoa Town Hall, info. 782-3023

Nevada 81 Traveling Photography Show, 3-8/3, Nevada State Museum, Carson City

Carson City 4th of July, picnic 11am-4pm, fireworks at dusk, Mills Park

Fernley 4th of July, parade, games and BBQ at the Out of Town Park

Incline Village 4th of July, games, band concert, evening fireworks, Incline Beach and Village Green, Incline Village

Kirkwood 4th of July, ski races and BBQ, Lake Tahoe, info. 916-544-5050

Lovelock 4th of July, fireworks, parade and contests, City Park

Virginia City 4th of July, parade

Yerington 4th of July, bicycle motocross, contests, games, concessions 10am, fireworks at dusk, fairgrounds

Carson Valley Mule Days, 4-5, mule show, Carson Valley Arena, 8am, Gardnerville

Liar's Race, 5, race in anything except boats on Walker Lake, Hawthorne

Reno Padres vs. San Jose, 5-6, Class A pro baseball, Moana Stadium, Reno

Lake Tahoe Boat Show, 9-12, Tahoe Keys Marina, South Lake Tahoe

Queen of Hearts Expo, 10-12, coin and stamp show, Sahara, Reno

Reno Padres vs. Modesto, 10-12, Class A pro baseball, Moana Stadium, Reno

Tombola Festival, 11, parade 11am, crafts and food booths, entertainment, western shootouts, skydrivers, BBQ at Pickett Park, Reno

Fireman's Steak Fry & Dance, 11, Smith Valley Community Hall, 6pm, Wellington

Bluegrass Concert, 11, Buzzards Roost, Pioneer Theatre, Reno

Rock Point Mill Tour, 11, 2-hour tour of historic Comstock stamp mill site, 10am, Dayton State Park

United Bicycle Races, 11-12, fairgrounds, 10am, Reno

Piper's Opera House, 12, Reno Chamber Orchestra, 2pm, Virginia City





JIM CRANDALL PHOTOS

The Red Shirts Are Coming

Firefighting fans and red-shirted firemen will be showing off antique equipment and spraying a lot of water around Virginia City on August 1-2. It's the Comstock Firemen's Muster, and up to 1,000 firemen from around the West are expected for the two days of races, hose cart and pumping contests, bucket brigades and general revelry.

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THE NEVADA CALENDAR

(Continued from previous page)

Walker Lake 100 Marathon, 12, boat racing, noon, Cliff House Marina, Hawthorne
"Charlie's Monument," 15, musical, Pioneer Theatre, Reno
All Indian Rodeo, 17-19, rodeo grounds, Fallon
"Fiddler on the Roof," 17-18, 21, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe
Boxing Festival, 18, Casino West parking lot, 7pm, Yerington
Silver City Fireman's Ball, 18, food, bands and dancing outdoors at the firehouse, late afternoon and evening
Spooner Lake Photographic Walk, 18, technique discussion and easy 3-mile walk, 9am, Spooner Lake, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park
Jackpot of Gems 81, 18-19, gem and mineral show, Coliseum, Reno
Piper's Opera House, 19, Kathleen Lenski and Marilyn Swan, violin and piano, 2pm, Virginia City
Sierra Nevada Open Golf Tournament, 20-23, Edgewood Golf Course, Stateline
Reno Padres vs. Fresno, 21-23, Class A pro baseball, 7:30pm, Moana Stadium, Reno
"Guys & Dolls," 24-25, 28, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe
Conklin's Antique Show, 24-26, Coliseum, Reno
Reno Padres vs. Visalia, 24-27, Class A pro baseball, 7:30pm, Moana Stadium, Reno
Evening Star Talk, 25, bring your own BBQ and gaze at the stars, 7pm, Fort Churchill
Ecology of a Dune Environment, 25, exploring dune formations, animals and plants, 9am, Washoe Lake State Park
Arts & Crafts Show, 25-26, live entertainment, food booths, Commons Beach, Tahoe City, info. 916-546-5562
Piper's Opera House, 25, Hal Holbrook in his one-man show "Mark Twain Tonight," 8pm; booking is tentative, so for confirmation call 847-0433, Virginia City
Reno Gay Rodeo, 30-8/2, fairgrounds, Reno
"You're a Good Man Charlie Brown," 31, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe

AUGUST

Lahontan Campfire Program, 1, talk by rangers, 8pm, Silver Springs Beach 7 Lahontan Rec. Area
History at Spooner Meadows, 1, 3-mile walk and talk with historian and rangers on area's importance to the Comstock, 1pm, Spooner Lake, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park
Virginia City Firemen's Muster, 1-2, hose laying, bucket brigade, pumping and hose cart competitions daily; 1: parade 9am, steak fry 6pm, western dance, info. 847-0311
Garage Sale, 1-2, Smith Valley Community Hall, Sat. 8am-5pm, Sun. 9am-2pm, Wellington
"You're a Good Man Charlie Brown," 1, 6, 11-12, 18, 22, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe
"Star Child," 4-5, religious play, 8pm, Pioneer Theatre, Reno
Reno Padres vs. Stockton, 4-6, Class A pro

baseball, Moana Stadium, 7:30pm, Reno

"Fiddler on the Roof," 4-5, 7 13, 15, 27-29, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe

Reno Gem & Mineral Society, 5, free, 8pm, 480 S. Rock Blvd., Sparks

Capital City Fair, 6-9, carnival and exhibits daily; 6: team cow penning 8pm, 7: jackpot team roping 8pm, 8-9: rodeo 8pm, Fuji Park, Carson City

Northern Nevada Home Builders Show, 6-9, Coliseum, Reno

Lampson's Plaza Arts Festival, 6-10, South Lake Tahoe

Reno Padres vs. Lodi, 7-9, Class A pro baseball, Moana Stadium, Reno

Cold Duck Convention, 7-9, bridge tournament, Pioneer Theatre, Reno

Nevada 81 Traveling Photography Show, 7-20, Genoa Courthouse Museum

Zazpiak Bat Basque Festival, 8, Mass 10am followed by BBQ, dancing and contests, fairgrounds, Reno

Evening Stargaze, 8, expert describes constellations and myths, preceded by BYO-BBQ at 7pm, Dayton State Park

"Guys & Dolls," 8, 14, 19-21, 25-26, South Tahoe High School, 8pm, South Lake Tahoe

Churchill County Fair, 8-15, Fallon fairgrounds. 8: cutting horse, calf branding, evening western dance; 9: paint horse show; 10: singalong, pot luck 6pm, Oats Park; 12: team roping 7pm; 13: opening ceremonies 6:30pm, cow chip toss, ribbon roping; 14: tennis tournament, 4-H horse show 8am-3pm, small animal judging 2pm, gymkhana and barrel racing 5pm, goat show 6pm, dance 8:30pm; 15: tennis and horseshoe tournaments, large animal judging and dog show 8am, English and open horse shows 8am-noon, tricycle race and baby crawl 10:30am, kids' games noon, dairy show and cow penning contest 1pm, drag races 2pm, stage band 6pm, plus music all day Thurs.-Sun.

Walker Lake Ski Meet, 9, Cliff House Marina, 9am, Hawthorne

Ehrman Mansion Art Show, 9-16, arts and crafts fair, Sugar Pine Point, Lake Tahoe, info. 916-546-5562

Moonlight Washoe Indian Talk, 14, expert describes Washoe legends and culture, 8pm, Group Area, Washoe Lake State Park

Shakespeare Festival, 14-22, "Romeo & Juliet," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Comedy

Churchill County's Cow Chip Championship

One of the most popular events of the Churchill County Fair in Fallon is the cow chip throwing contest. Last year politicians made the best barnyard frisbie showings with Governor Robert List taking top honors for accuracy and Assemblyman Virgil Getto winning the distance throw. The fair is a week-long festival of riding events, livestock judging, C&W dances and zany events. August 8-15 at the Fallon fairgrounds.



Julia Bulette by Angie Whitson. Approximately 15" plus base.
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Julia Bulette, born in England of French parentage, at an early age moved to New Orleans with her family; but in 1859 she migrated to Virginia City, Nevada. She quickly became one of the most popular and expensive "Ladies of the Evening" the West ever had. Her clients consisted of bankers, wealthy silver miners, mayors and big time cattlemen; but her steady boyfriend was the Chief of the Volunteer Fireman's Brigade # 1. Julia had another side and she donated heavily to charitable organizations; they made her an honorary fireman, and when a fever epidemic fell upon the town, she turned her brothel into a temporary hospital; she even sold her prized furs and jewels to purchase food and clothing for the stricken. However, misfortune struck, and in 1867 she was murdered by a thief. The women of the town would not permit her to be buried in hallowed ground: So she was interred 200 yards from the cemetery, on a hill, in a conspicuous spot where her grave could be seen from a local saloon. Two thousand persons attended her funeral, all of them men and her tombstone marker was the head of her bed.

(This engraved plaque is on the back of each headboard)

THE MEYERS GALLERIES

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THE NEVADA CALENDAR

(Continued from previous page)

of Errors," 8pm, Sand Harbor, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park

Western U.S. Diamond Belt Boxing Tournament, 14-15, MGM Grand Hotel, 7pm, Reno

Shrine Circus, 14-16, Coliseum, Reno

Antique Bottle Show, 15, Coliseum, 9am-6pm, Reno

Santa Maria Day, 15, parade at 10am, fire department waterfights, games, contests, evening dance, downtown Dayton

Sherwood Forest Festival, 15-16, arts and crafts, entertainment, food booths, games and art show, Sat. 11am-6pm, Sun. 1-5pm, Brewery Arts Center, Carson City

Chamber of Commerce BBQ, 16, Ponderosa Ranch, 6:30pm, Incline Village

Reno Padres vs. Redwood Pioneers, 18-20, Class A pro baseball, 7:30pm, Moana Stadium, Reno

Lyon County Fair & Rodeo, 20-23, Yerington. 20: frog jumping contest 4pm, crafts, exhibits, fairgrounds; 21: tractor rodeo 4pm; 22: rodeo 1pm, boxing matches 7:30pm, street dance 9pm; 23: rodeo 1pm, followed by demolition derby, fairgrounds, info. 463-2259

Pony Bob Youth Rodeo, 21-23, free, 10am, Joe Gandolfo Arena, Sparks

Reno Padres vs. San Jose, 21-23, Class A pro baseball, Moana Stadium, Reno

Evening Stargaze, 22, expert describes constellations and myths, preceded by BYO-BBQ at 7pm, Washoe Lake State Park

Pickle Family Circus, 22-23, Commons Beach, noon & 3pm, Tahoe City

National Antique Gun Show, 22-23, Coliseum, 9am-5pm, Reno

Truckee Meadows Quilt Show, 22-23, Coliseum, 10am-5pm, Reno

Kokanee Fishing Demonstration, 29, Dept. of Wildlife talk on kokanee salmon, 3pm, Cave Rock, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park

Reno Padres vs. Modesto, 29-30, Class A pro baseball, Moana Stadium, Reno

Berlin Special Events, 29-30, tours of historic Berlin, 10am-4pm, Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park, 23 miles east of Gabbs, info. 867-3001

Photography Show, 30-9/30, Genoa Courthouse Museum

Nevada 81 Traveling Photography Show, 31-9/14, library, Yerington

COMING ATTRACTIONS IN SEPTEMBER

Pioche Labor Day 4-7, mining events, dances, parade

Elko County Fair, 4-7, horse racing, exhibits, dances, Convention Center

Winnemucca Rodeo & Tri County Fair, 4-7, PRCA rodeo, dances, parade, fairgrounds

Silver State Marathon, 6, 26-mile run starting at Davis Creek Park, Washoe Valley

Nevada State Fair, 9-13, fairgrounds, Reno

Jaycees' State Fair, 9-13, Convention Center, Las Vegas

Camel Races, 11-13, Virginia City

Lake Mead 50 & 75 mile Waterski Marathon, 12-13, Boulder Beach

Reno National Championship Air Races, 15-17, Stead □

Does the Chicken Arm Wrestle?

Late this summer the Reno fairground goes wild as the Nevada State Fair presents its annual mad fling of carnival rides, contests, exhibits, livestock shows, C&W music and daredevil drivers that would leave the Duke Boys ho-humming back at the Hazard garage.

During the fair's five-day reign, September 9-13, you can also see some candidates ripe for Ripley's. One is a chicken that plays tic-tac-toe against all challengers. According to fair manager David Drew, the chicken always wins. There's also a pygmy goat that looks like a raccoon.

As whirlybird riders scream in mock-terror, arm wrestlers meet for the Nevada amateur championships, and quick-witted young stock raisers compete in the Livestock Bowl. At night the midway and pavilions are lush with the aroma of sawdust and popcorn, and the Ferris wheel appears to soar higher than the MGM tower. The fair can be frantic or enchanting, but best of all it's fun.



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So c'mon. If it's good times you're cravin', you're gonna find 'em at the Nevada State Fair.

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KEITH CHESNUT

Taking a Dive

In the beautiful and often dangerous underwater world of Nevada's lakes, scuba divers find ghost towns, shipwrecks, serpents and other unexpected treasures of the deep. By Roger Smith

It's like being in the Twilight Zone. All is slow motion. Beyond 80 or 90 feet in any direction the world blurs into a gray cloud. You float above the floor as a dust mote floats in the air—suspended, tossed by any stray current. Total silence reigns, except for the distorted roar of your own breathing.

That's scuba diving. It places you in the most alien environment of all sports. Your muscles often work against you. Normal sense perception cannot warn you of danger. Pressure underwater can cause dangerous euphoria. Your life depends second by second upon the small cylinder of compressed air strapped to your back.

Despite the dangers, or perhaps because of them, scuba diving is a deeply pleasurable sport. Underwater, you enjoy a weightless peace, and you move with unaccustomed freedom and grace. You become an involved spectator in a strange, new world.

Probably nowhere is that underwater world stranger than in Nevada, because Nevada's lakes offer both the best and worst in diving. The unusually clear water in mountain and desert lakes—Lake Tahoe and Soda Lake, for instance—allows the diver a field of vision he can seldom enjoy elsewhere. But the altitude of Great Basin lakes and their unpredictable currents require special precautions both before and during dives.

On my first scuba dive in Nevada I discovered the best and worst a diver can ever encounter and live to talk about it. I drove to Lake Tahoe with a couple of friends who were thoroughly experienced in diving there. Although I hadn't been diving in more than three years and had never dived in Nevada, I felt confident. I only wanted to learn the fine adjustments to equipment and special time calculations that Tahoe's altitude requires.

> **"In Lake Mead you can hunt for freshwater clams at Saddle Island and see the remains of St. Thomas, a Mormon town covered by water after the creation of Hoover Dam."**

But the dive turned into a comedy of errors. I was lucky I didn't drown.

As soon as I touched the bottom, my troubles began. I had not hooked enough weights on my belt. So instead of sitting lightly on the bottom 25 feet down, as I should have, I began to float toward the surface. I adjusted my buoyancy compensator hurriedly. But nothing worked. I continued to rise. Finally, I had to swim back down and grab onto a small boulder.

It was a poor improvisation. And all the turning and twisting I had gone through had loosened the shoulder straps on my scuba tanks. Before I knew it, the tanks had slipped off my back and were floating to the surface, towing me behind by the mouthpiece. I felt more discomfort and embarrassment than fear, thank goodness. Fear, when it explodes into panic, kills.

I abandoned the dive finally and swam ashore to redon my tanks. I had learned, and learned quickly, the only fine point in scuba diving anywhere:

never assume anything. Inattention can lead to a potentially disastrous accident even during an easy dive in an ideal setting. Eventually, I joined my friends underwater again and, with my gear in order and my concentration increased, settled down to enjoy the lake.

Tahoe is known for two qualities: the clarity of the water and the lack of underwater scenery. Large boulders and assorted smaller rubble strew the bottom up to a hundred yards from shore, where trout sometimes dart among the rocks and almost everywhere you can see crayfish scuttling backwards in the mud, raising little grayish-brown clouds as they go. But most of the lake bottom is as barren as an alkali flat.

Beyond the boulders, bare sand stretches gradually downward for a couple hundred yards to a cliff. There the bottom drops suddenly from 90 feet to several hundred.

Even without schools of fish and thick vegetation, Tahoe still holds great natural beauty for the underwater sightseer because of its clarity. Sunlight filters down from the surface as it does through trees on a slightly breezy day, forming slender, quavering lightcicles. In shallower water, light focused by surface waves runs in parallel bands over the sandy bottom.

"Soda Lake near Fallon offers the state's best all-around diving. Its water covers an abandoned soda factory, and the buildings and train cars are paradise for explorers."

Best of all, Tahoe allows divers to perform aquabatics without fear of obstacles. Just past the boulder zone, in 25 feet of water, you can roll leisurely about, dive and whirl like a seal, or simply let yourself sink gently to the bottom face up, watching light play upon the surface. A novel, exciting peace exists under Tahoe's surface.

But Tahoe isn't the only underwater attraction in Nevada.

Soda Lake near Fallon offers the state's best all-around diving. The water temperature reaches 75 degrees at times, so a wetsuit isn't always needed, and the spring-produced water is often as clear as Tahoe. But underwater scenery makes Soda Lake the most interesting dive in Nevada. Its water covers an abandoned soda factory, and the frame buildings, silos, train cars, and steam-operated heavy equipment are paradise for explorers.

Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake also provide good diving, although both are unpredictable and sometimes dangerous. The lakes stay cold, and their waters are often cloudy. Steep embankments and wind currents pose serious threats to inexperienced divers—especially in Pyramid. But both also promise varied, fascinating exploration. Pyramid has unique calcium carbonate rock formations and the rare cui-ui fish, and Walker has a series of caves and underwater wreckage. (No diver, however, has yet reported sighting Walker's legendary serpent.)

Topaz Lake is particularly interesting for its underwater flora, although

Getting Your Fins Wet

Scuba, an acronym for "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus," requires more than simply strapping on tanks and flippers and jumping in. A diver must first understand how his equipment works—and there's a lot to understand. Basic gear includes tanks, wetsuit (necessary year-round in most Nevada lakes), buoyancy compensator, regulator, mask, weight belt, fins, pressure and depth gauges. By the time a diver gets into the water he can look like a refugee from a 1950s science fiction movie.

It's equally important to know how your body changes underwater. For example, breathing must be carefully controlled in the water. Incorrect breathing can be fatal. If a diver holds his breath while swimming to the surface—a typical mistake of self-trained divers—the decreasing water pressure allows the air in his lungs to expand until it bursts through his lungs, bubbling into his tissues and blood stream. The condition is known as an *air embolism.*

Other physiological dangers work more subtly. Descending below 75 feet, divers risk nitrogen narcosis—*rapture of the deep.* It produces a euphoric giddiness, something like being drunk. Divers have been known to remove regulators from their mouths and feed the air bubbles to fish, turn endless somersaults, and allow themselves to sink to dangerous depths, immensely enjoying themselves until they drowned. Experience teaches divers how to prepare for such reactions.

The *bends* pose a particular threat to divers who visit Nevada's high altitude lakes. As a diver stays underwater, water pressure causes waste gases to build up in his tissue, and he must know how to manage his time so that he doesn't accumulate more gases than can dissipate when he swims to the surface. High altitude creates special problems in calculating how long to dive and how long to wait between dives.

The only way to learn how to dive safely is through a certified instructor. Most instructors operate out of dive shops, and some give private lessons. But unless instructors are certified under the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the YMCA, Scuba Schools, Inc. (SSI), the National Association of Scuba Diving Schools (NASDS), or a handful of smaller organizations, they are not qualified to teach scuba.

In southern Nevada, beginning divers can take lessons through Desert Divers Supply, Inc. and the Scuba Center, both of Las Vegas; and in the north, through Sierra Diving Center and Mountain Lakes Diving Center in Reno and the Outdoorsman in Carson City. —*RS*

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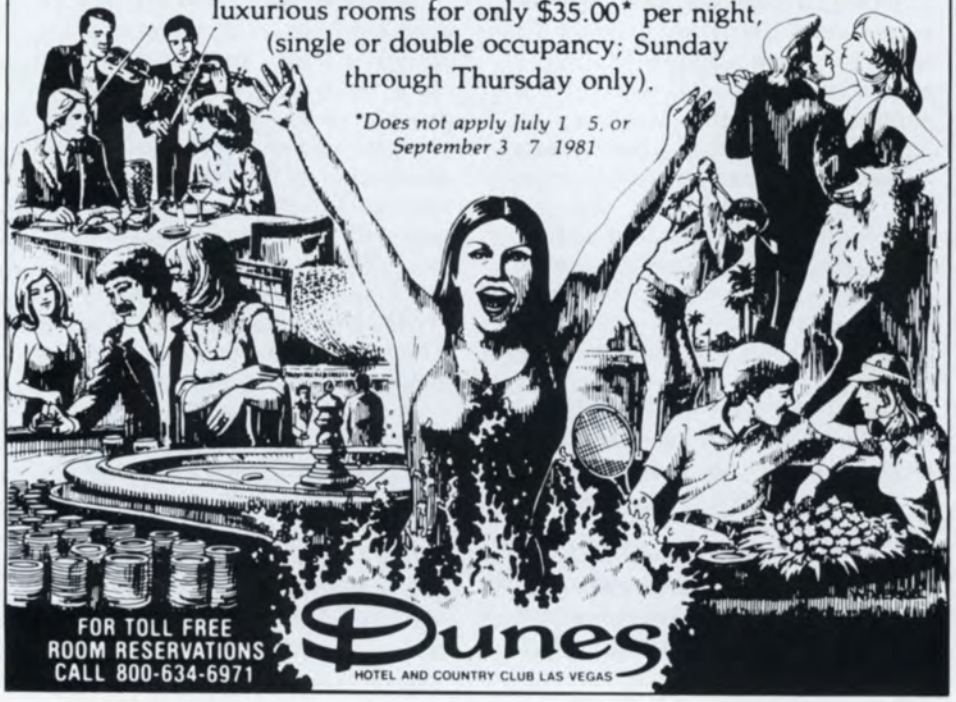


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(Continued from previous page)

its water is cold and turbid. Scientists are currently conducting marine biological studies there.

Divers also frequent many of the high desert lakes and reservoirs of northern Nevada. Some contain spectacular rock formations—Rye Patch Reservoir is one—but their silty, chilly waters and difficult access make them best suited for the expert diver.

In southern Nevada, Lake Mead promises the best diving. The water is warm (ranging from 85 to 60 degrees down to 60 feet) and stable. But visibility varies greatly, depending on the season, water level and location; at the lake's clearest, in the winter months, you can see 50 feet. With a few exceptions, the lake's currents are unnoticeable. Divers should check with Lake Mead National Recreation Area officials about restricted and hazardous areas.

The underwater world of Lake Mead offers a bit of everything. At Wishing Well Cove and Boulder Canyon, you can inspect narrow wet gulches and steep, stepped cliffs. At Saddle Island, you can hunt for freshwater clams. And at St. Thomas, when water visibility permits it, you can visit the remains of a Mormon town that was covered by water after the creation of Hoover Dam.

South of Lake Mead is Lake Mohave, and its diving opportunities are much like Mead's. Four and a quarter miles below the dam in 25 to 35 feet of water rests a work barge that sank in 1946. Although protected from souvenir hunters under the Antiquities Act, the boat is accessible and provides a fascinating dive.

Most of the best dive sites in both Lake Mead and Lake Mohave can be reached only by boat and are near heavily used sections of the lakes. Divers should mark their dive sites and watch carefully for boat traffic.

South and north, Nevada underwater reflects dry land Nevada. Water clarity often matches the state's famed clean air. The harshly attractive, rock-colored desert extends underwater with spectacular variations. The underwater ghost towns at St. Thomas and Soda Lake are as mysterious in their sodden remains of former splendor as any sun-dried, heat-warped abandoned mining camp.

But best of all, you'll find even less crowding under Nevada's lakes than above them. □

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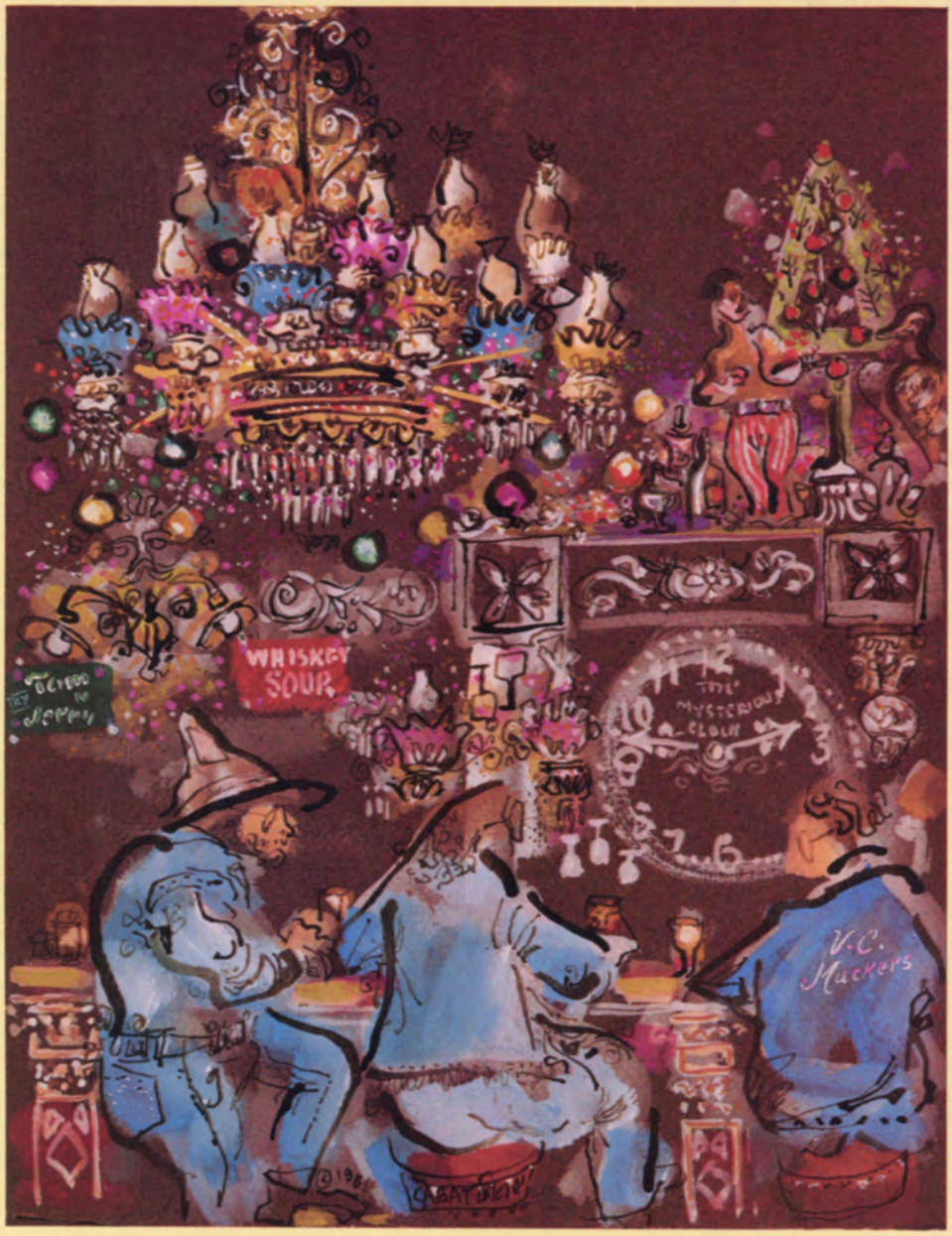
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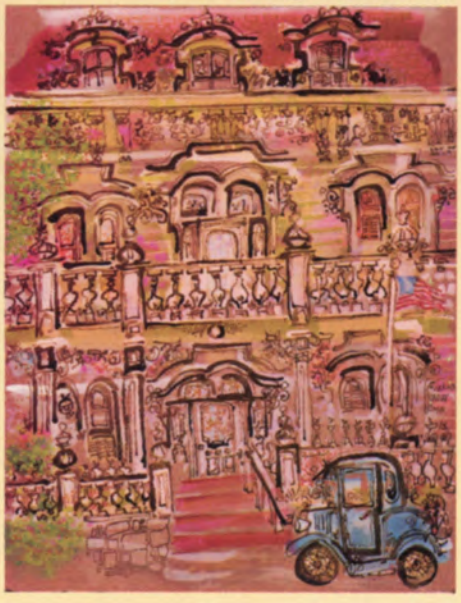
"Walking down C Street is like a trip into history," says Erni Cabat. "That is one of the things that attracted me to Virginia City. It's one of the greatest living ghost towns."

Cabat, the world-traveling Tucson artist whose casino and people portraits appear in the magazine's 1981 Special Gaming Edition, visited Virginia earlier this year to record his impressions of the old camp for *Nevada* readers. For several days he explored the sloping streets, the elegant mansions, the old time saloons. "I love the old-fashioned buildings and the wooden sidewalks. You look up and, by God, there's a horsedrawn carriage on the saloon balcony. It's exciting for an artist.

"Just the people themselves were fascinating," he says. "That's one of the reasons I paint in Nevada. I just hope the humor and hope and friendliness I found in this town never get spoiled."

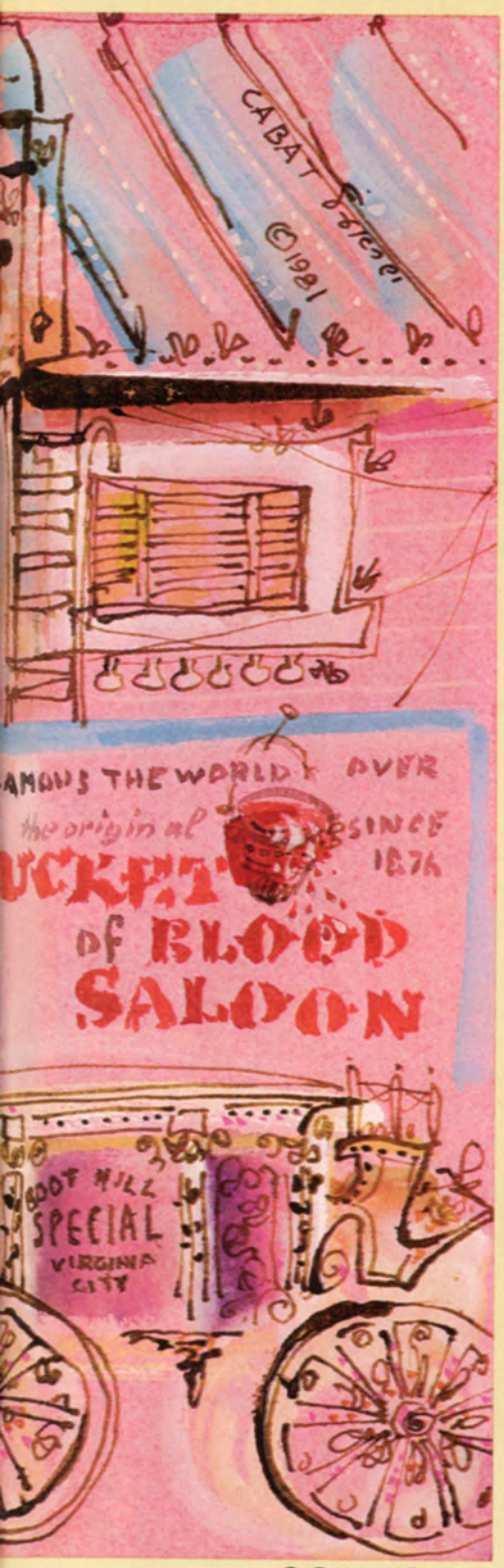
"The old time saloons are fascinating with their mixture of the old and the new—and the names."

The Savage Mansion





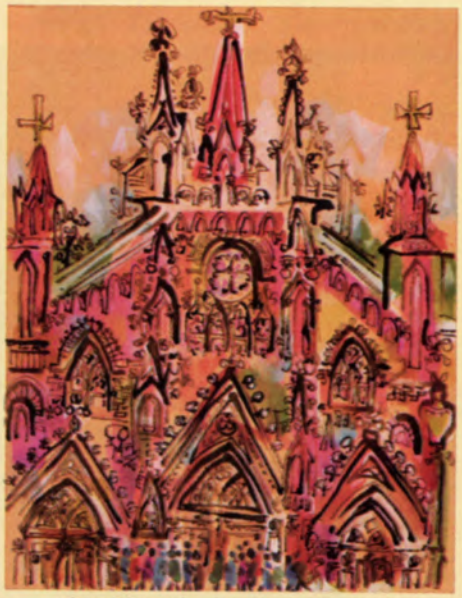
"C Street is an old-fashioned street. The names always envision romance, lust, greed, shooting, bars, gambling. It's like another world, a foreign country."



C Street Scene



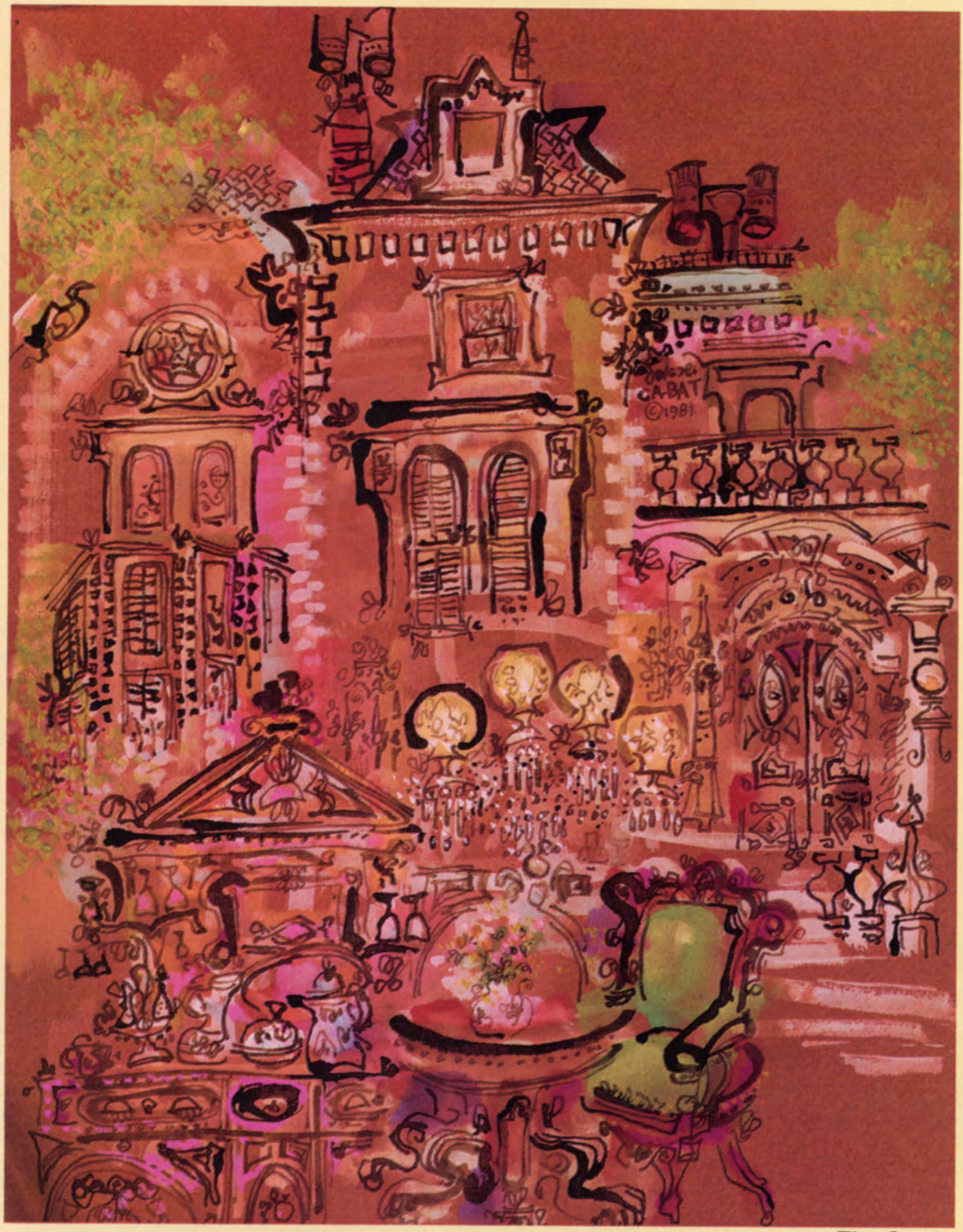
Territorial Enterprise Building



St. Mary's in the Mountains



Mark Twain Saloon



The Castle

"I paint because I feel the need to record some of my inner feelings for our children and grandchildren, because what we see today may not be here tomorrow."

The Relentless Gourmand

STEAKS & DAIQUIRIS IN THE BOONDOCKS

As a kid it was heaven bouncing along the back roads of Lincoln County yelling at jackrabbits from the back of a '34 Ford pickup. Every 10 miles the truck's radiator would need a transfusion, the driver a Budweiser, and then we could hunt mischief in the boondocks where you can escape noise and city smells for solitude and the musky fragrance of sagebrush.

Rich and Lois Alfano were searching for that sense of freedom when they settled on 150 acres at the base of 9,296-foot Mt. Wilson, 32 miles north of Pioche. There in the pinyon and cedar trees, nine miles by dirt road from U.S. 93, the couple runs one of the most enjoyable—and most remote—steak houses in Nevada.

"We wanted to leave the rat race and get into the country," says Lois. "And besides, Rich had been dreaming about designing his own western-style town for 15 years."

Rich Alfano, a contractor from Redding, California, had visions of a guest ranch with fishing, cookouts, hayrides, stables and frontier shops. The reservoirs aren't stocked with fish yet, and hayrides will have to wait until there's more than one horse, but since the Alfanos opened a year ago, customers have been coming from as far away as Ely, 95 miles north, to dine at the Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch.

For now Rich's dream town has four motel units and a restored homesteader's cabin for rent. A long, rambling building houses the Craw Creek Saloon and two restaurants.

In summer you can gorge twice a month on special fare like fresh crab or roast pig and then dance in the bar to a country-rock group.

In the saloon you can order the improbable house specialty, strawberry daiquiris, and enjoy the warmth of the fireplace, which is lit even on summer evenings. The stained glass windows are family-made, and the elaborate balcony is Rich's creation.

Each restaurant is different. At the Pinyon Pine, which is used for breakfast and lunch, guests have a beautiful view of the mountains. The Carter House has a Victorian atmosphere with chandelier and fireplace.

For dinner you can order steak, lobster, scampi, chicken, trout or ribs. The house steak, a tender sirloin, is worth the $7.95 price. Daily specials range from meatloaf to cordon bleu. Meals are served with homemade soup, salad, fresh bread and baked potato. There's a good selection of desserts: cheesecake, carrot cake, pie and homemade ice cream.

Twice a month in the summer you can gorge on such special fare as fresh crab or roast pig. Those weekends you also can dance in the bar to country-rock groups like the Lytle Orchestra, a local band whose members are ranchers and include a county commissioner.

Chances of finding a bed afterwards, however, have been limited lately—the Alfanos' motel and cabin have been booked solid by surveyors for the proposed MX missile system. So

(Continued on page 94)

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RELENTLESS GOURMAND

(Continued from page 91)

rooms might not be available, but it won't hurt to ask.—*Ann Henderson*

Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch, 702-724-3161. The ranch's sign is on U.S. 93 about 23 miles north of Pioche and 86 miles south of Ely. From the turnoff it's nine miles east by improved dirt road. Dinner is $4.95 to $15.95, daily from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Reservations recommended. Visa, MC.

MAUDE'S CHILI RECIPE IS STEAD'S HOTTEST SECRET

For more than 30 years Maude's outrageously good chili has been a staple of the Air Base Inn. But if you want to know how it's made, good luck.

The secret is guarded by all of the women who work at the Stead saloon. "It's just meat, beans and some special spices," you will be told.

Personable Peggy handles the day crowd and noon-hour rush with expertise. No amount of coaxing will get her to divulge the recipe for Maude's chili, but she will refer you to owner Diane Kenney.

Amicable Amy chats freely with the customers on the evening shift, but she disclaims any knowledge of the ingredients with a knowing smile. She, too, says, "Ask Diane."

Delightful Diane bought the Air Base Inn from Maude and Jake several years ago. Diane is stunning: a petite blond with limpid blue eyes. She makes everyone feel at home and will chat for hours about everything except her chili secret. "It goes only with the sale of the establishment," she says.

Although the Air Base Inn is primarily a bar and the kitchen consists of one small grill, it's definitely worth a visit for lunch or dinner. The superb chili alone is $1.25 a bowl or 75 cents a cup. How long has it been since you had a hamburger ($1.75) where the meat hangs all-out in a large bun? The chiliburger ($2.50) is open-face with chili laced with cheese and onion and heaped to the point of spilling over the dish.

The noon pool games are friendly but serious. The crack of the cue ball mixes with the gentle noise of the electronic pinball and galaxy games and the slots. Regulars just talk a little louder. The atmosphere is pleasing.

The Air Base Inn is nine miles north of Reno off U.S. 395 at Stead, a former Air Force base. Take the Stead off ramp, cross the cattle guard and turn left on Stead Boulevard. Go under the freeway to the stop sign at old 395 and turn left again. The chocolate-brown, ramshackle Air Base Inn will be on your left. There you park against old rail ties held together with steel plates and rail spikes. Peavine Mountain rises imposingly to the southwest. The nearby homes are scattered and show signs of time. The view is of sagebrush and Nevada color. The feeling is rural, and it's good.

You may walk into the Air Base Inn a stranger, but when you leave you know you will soon cross the cattle grate again for Maude's chili. You can ask Diane, but don't expect to learn how it's made. —*Edward P. York*

The Air Base Inn, Stead Boulevard in Stead, nine miles north of Reno off U.S. 395, phone 702-972-4904. Open 9 a.m. to midnight daily.

SPARKS' NO. 1 MOUSE

Ask any kid who Dolli Dimples, Sally Sashay, Jasper, Foxy Colleen or Mr. Munch are, and he or she will respond with enthusiasm: Chuck E. Cheese Pizza!

This is a restaurant that cares about kids. In the dining room Jasper, Colleen and other mechanical life-sized puppets perform every 10 minutes, and in the ice cream parlor children can make their own sundaes.

At this Sparks pizza house the food could be laced with dirt and the kids would keep coming back. But the managers seem to know that a gimmick will not make a soggy crust taste better. So they strive to present good food at reasonable prices. The small pizzas are $3.50 (cheese) to $6.25 (the combo), medium $6.50 to $9, and large $7.80 to $10.25. There are favorite kids' sandwiches like hot dogs, barbecued beef and submarines ($1.48 to $2.75), and for parents seeking something lighter, the house has a fresh salad bar.

While waiting for the food you can play any of 60 video games such as air hockey and skeet ball, which are operated with tokens provided at purchase. The kids also will meet in the flesh Chuck E. Cheese, a giant mouse who ambles about playing host. When you see the thrill of a child eating a self-made sundae at Dolli Dimple's piano bar, you'll appreciate how much Chuck E.'s creator must like kids.—*Sue James*

Chuck E. Cheese Pizza, Greenbrae Shopping Center, Sparks, phone 702-358-9228. Open Sunday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to midnight.

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