

WESTERN GATES TO DEATH VALLEY

Eighty miles west of Death Valley, the Midland Trail comes north out of the Mojave Desert and follows along the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada Range to the north end of Owens Valley. In Owens Valley the Midland Trail is half a day's drive from Death Valley. The valley roads lead eastward from Owens Valley at the towns of Olancho and Lone Pine.

Owens Valley, where the Owens River once ran, is the valley of water rights and wrongs. Into Owens Valley the Los Angeles aqueduct reaches like a massive and thirsty

snake to swallow the waters of the Sierra Nevada Range. Discussion of the water rights and wrongs of Owens Valley is fraught with dynamite. Through grim years of combat for the proprietary rights to the water of the Sierra watershed, Owens Valley countered Los Angeles suavity with bitterness, and punctuated its protests against despoilation by explosions of giant powder in the aqueduct.

"Justice!" cried the embattled farmers.

"Blackmail!" protested the greathearted city.

. . . But now the war is over. There has been equitable adjustment. At a cost of around six million dollars, Los Angeles has purchased the Owens Valley towns of Lone Pine, Big Pine, Independence and Bishop. Pumping plants dot the abandoned ranches and orchards of Owens Valley. The water table drops every year. But everybody in Owens Valley is happy. Owens Valley towns have no powerful chamber of commerce, no modern publicity machinery, no large newspapers. Owens Valley has an aqueduct. Everybody in Owens Valley is very happy. The aqueduct reaches thirstily for more water. At present writing there are beautiful lakes in the high Sierras. Babylon was a gay town while she lasted. She ran out of water.

Lone Pine at the base of Mount Whitney is an easy day's drive from Los Angeles over the Midland Trail. The trip can be made in less time late at night when traffic along the highway is lightest. The motorist interested in making mileage can reach Lone Pine in five hours or less, depending upon the weight of his right foot. The trip is only two hundred and twenty miles, and at night there is no scenery to distract the man who is in a hurry. Disturbing scenery fills the daylight hours along the Midland Trail. The Trail

leaves the Pacific Slope at Saugus and for thirty miles twists patiently through Mint Cañon and the San Gabriel Mountains. From the confining walls of the cañon and the green breasts of the mountains, the road descends upon the Palm-dale ranches, bright upon the dun sweep of the Mojave Desert where the desert touches the base of the Coast Range. Beyond Lancaster and across thirty miles of level desert is Mojave town. Forests of yucca trees and fertile ranches accompany the road into the desert. The trail sings on amid the blues, whites, greens, tans, and browns of open desert into Mojave town.

The spelling of Mojave has been changed. Folks used to pronounce the J and confuse the town with a blend of coffee. It is now spelled Mohave. To be completely in character, wear a wide hat and call the town Moharve. Mojave started out as a long train shed which used to lose its roof when the Mojave wind blew. There were two women in town in those days. Mrs. Morrisey was the white woman; and there was a Paiute squaw. Borax teamsters in with their loads from Death Valley used to gather around the tables in Wilson's saloon. The play was fast. Their pay didn't last long. That was forty-five years ago. They played with star-back cards; and they averaged a deal to a deck. "Bring us a new pack a cards with somethen above deuces!" The floor of Wilson's saloon was kept deep in discarded packs. To the Death Valley teamsters and swampers tearing a pack of cards across was not a parlor trick. They had strong hands.

Mojave has changed since those days. Heavy motor traffic comes down from the San Joaquin Valley through Tehachapi Pass to join the Owens Valley traffic beating through Mojave. Service stations, garages, restaurants

and hotels extend along the highway. There's a railroad eating house with starched waitresses in black stockings. At night the railroad runs switch engines back and forth through town with gayly ringing bells to keep travelers who stop over night from becoming lonesome and moody. Mojave has brightened and grown since the teamsters brought their mules there. Mojave has improved; but the Mojave winds have not been turned off. They are strong through long practice.

Just beyond the town of Mojave, the low hills at the south end of the Sierra Nevada Range rise beside the Midland Trail. Once joined, the Sierras and the Trail run northward together. Hunters and fishermen speed northward along the east base of the Sierras bound for the game trails which enter the Sierras from Owens Valley. Tents and camping gear are lashed to the bumpers and running boards of the zooming cars. Sightseers and travelers rush along the road. Devouter, less hurried pilgrims stop along the Trail.

The Death Valley Party of 1849 passed this way on the last leg of the trek to the Pacific. The emigrants halted and rested in Indian Wells Valley before they descended Red Rock Cañon to meet the Mojave. Californians make pilgrimage to the scenes along this trail of their fathers. Sundays and holidays bring them into Red Rock Cañon with box lunches. Families picnic in the niches and among the pinnacles of Red Rock Cañon. They examine and admire the blazing rocks. Their forefathers walked through here. The children romping over the rock slides and shouting from their perches on the sculptured figures in the cañon walls must be rounded up early. Los Angeles, and home, is a long drive. Traffic will be heavy along the Mojave

where the emigrants lunged despairingly onward with their loads of deadly weariness. Father and mother have been up since six o'clock and they are very tired.

Death Valley roads leave the Midland Trail at Olancho and Lone Pine, in the high trough of Owens Valley, and the highway speeds on through Owens Valley toward more northern Sierra trails, toward Mono Basin and Bridgeport, toward Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Owens Valley is over one hundred miles long and from two to eight miles wide. High ranges border the valley on east and west and run their sinuous crestlines seven thousand feet above the valley. At the northern end of the valley the mountain crests are forty miles apart; between Bishop and Big Pine the mountains pinch in on the valley until only fifteen miles separate their peaks; and at Owens Lake, where the Death Valley roads leave the Midland Trail, the high rock walls of the mountains are twenty-five miles apart. The western skyline above Owens Valley is gashed by hundreds of the high Sierra Nevada peaks. The naked and broken desert range known as the White Mountains or the Inyo Range closes the eastern horizon. Neither the Sierras nor the Inyo Range are friendly mountains. They are aloof, austere. They reek with their cold pride in their bulk and beauty. Mount Whitney is especially remote. Hailed as the highest mountain in the states, Mount Whitney, with other peaks clustered about its knees, looks coldly down upon Owens Valley at Lone Pine. According to the Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce Mount Whitney is fourteen thousand five hundred and two feet high; maps of the U. S. Geologic Survey give its height as fourteen thousand five hundred and one foot. The actual height of the mountain is probably somewhere between these two extremes. Thousands of

travelers visit Lone Pine to worship prideful Mount Whitney. And in the past many of the worshippers have made their devotions to the wrong peak on the tall Sierras.

Even Clarence King, who discovered and named Mount Whitney in 1864, did not always unerringly distinguish Mount Whitney from its accompanying spires. Visible only from a restricted sector of Lone Pine, Mount Whitney is not easily differentiated from the other peaks which have gathered about it to share its glory. It is deeply recessed in the range and perspective angles dwarf it and lift the foreground peaks up a few hundred feet to apparently top the higher tower of seclusive Mount Whitney. In 1871 Clarence King climbed up the fourteen thousand and forty-two feet of Mount Langley, thinking he was on Mount Whitney. His error was not discovered until 1873 when W. A. Goodyear announced that Clarence King had climbed the wrong peak. Mr. King's remarks upon hearing the news have been lost to posterity.

It remained for the Automobile Club of Southern California to resourcefully solve the problem of instantly identifying Mount Whitney and direct the admiration of travelers toward the proper peak. The Club installed a Mount Whitney signpost on the Midland Trail in Lone Pine. The upright post is pierced by a piece of pipe. Centered in the field of that pipe is Mount Whitney. Looking through that pipe you can see the high hat Mount Whitney wears. This is one way to see a mountain.

Owens Valley calls the Midland Trail, *El Camino Sierra*. Throughout the length of Owens Valley, trails branch from the Midland Trail to ascend into the remote Sierras. Packers, guides and outfitters and caterers to sportsmen, are spread along the Midland Trail for one hundred miles. The

forbidding scarp of the frowning Sierras hides thousands of lakes and streams. Trails lead from Owens Valley upward to high dank meadows. Golden and rainbow trout make fishermen hide behind trees to bait their hooks. Ducks and geese feed on Sierra lake shores. Quail and dove and sagehen populate the mountain valleys. Sportsmen bring hundreds of deer down the Sierra trails every hunting season. In past ages glaciers came down to the five thousand foot level of the Sierra cañons. A few small glaciers are still retreating up the cañons. The Sierras are big, high country. Their magnificent escarpment towers above Owens Valley. From the valley at thirty-six hundred feet above the sea, the gigantic alluvial washes are tilted against the range at the five or six thousand foot level. Above the alluvial cones, the granite face of the range strikes upward to culminate in more than one hundred peaks all above twelve thousand feet high.

Motor roads are breaking down the high barriers of the Sierras and giving the deplorers cause to emit low sounds of anguish. The Sierras are big enough to bear a few transverse motor trails. No one ever came to know a mountain through the services of an automobile. Highways into the tall hills may win more converts to the joys of entering the highlands upon dainty-footed horses. Perhaps more outlanders will come to know the creak and jingle of the climbing pack train, the keen pang of unutterable delight at the sharp clear beauty the greater mountains will reveal only to men, and their horses. Mountains yield only to legwork; never to engine power. Only man and animals can make real trail music. The coldly prideful Sierra Nevada Range scorns the small thunder of the scurrying blind beetles with which men are assaulting its flanks.

The Sierras are the range of the sportsman: the Inyo Range hulking above Owens Valley on the east belongs to the miners. The Sierras have given up moderate quantities of gold and tungsten, but the Inyo, or White, Mountains support an old and famous silver mine. Cerro Gordo Peak in the Inyos is a turret nine thousand two hundred feet above the sea, a landmark above Owens Lake and Owens Valley. At the foot of the west scarp of the peak at an elevation of eighty-five hundred feet, the main shaft of the Cerro Gordo Mine cuts downward into the limestone, marble, shales, and quartzites of the mountain. Keeler, the little town on the border of Owens Lake, is five thousand feet directly below Cerro Gordo and five miles in an air line from the mine. The road from Keeler to Cerro Gordo surmounts those five thousand feet in eight miles. It is a steep road.

Travelers along the Death Valley road which leaves Lone Pine to pass through Keeler look up at an enduring monument which horses have erected to themselves. From the smelter near Keeler an aerial tram swings up the steep flanks of the mountain to the Cerro Gordo Mine. Horses built that tram slung so giddily up the bald rock to the lofty mine. The first heavy cable for the tram was dragged and carried up the range by snaking files of horses. The freighter's horses that built the Cerro Gordo tram were sired by Pegasus.

Discovery of the Cerro Gordo Mine is credited to several different Mexicans and variously dated in several years during the sixties. Oscar Loew of the U. S. Geologic Survey visited the mine in 1875 and reported that Pablo Flores and some companions found the mine in 1866. The Mexicans did not do much with Cerro Gordo. Americans acquired control in 1869 and Cerro Gordo has been pro-

ducing intermittently ever since. Its most prosperous years were those between 1869 and 1876 when bonanza bodies of galena were being worked. During this period Cerro Gordo probably produced seven million dollars, although the usual exaggerated and popular estimates run the production up as high as twenty or thirty million.

The history of the Cerro Gordo Mine holds all the incidents common to an old big mine. It has known shut-downs, booms and legal squabbles. It has been sold by a U. S. marshal; and worked under lease. It has been pronounced very dead and then has been resuscitated. It has had its share of accidents. Jack Stewart says that forty Chinamen are walled up in one of its drifts caught there by a cavein over fifty years ago. Up until 1911, gold, silver and lead were extracted from Cerro Gordo's twenty miles of underground workings. And then, under the management of L. D. Gordon, the fifty year old mine began to give up zinc in profitable quantities. Cerro Gordo is still a mine.

Cerro Gordo is not the only mine in the mountains around Owens Valley, nor is mining the only industry. There are marble quarries between Lone Pine and Keeler, and chemical plants about the edge of Owens Lake. The chemical plants extract soda and allied salts from the thick saline solution which is Owens Lake. The lake is unbeautiful and the soda works, through which the Death Valley road passes, is one of the most gaunt and unlovely establishments in which men ever lived and worked. Ranching was once well established in Owens Valley. In addition to the serious ranchers who set their faces in frowns as they sternly worked their lands, miners who had made a stake used to settle in Owens Valley under the shadow of the Sierras and the Inyo Range. They

could fish and shoot and do a little prospecting, and tend their ranch in their spare time. Bill Corcoran settled in Owens Valley when he sold the National Bank Mine in Rhyolite. I was telling Bill how Jim Flake had been bragging to me about his preserves. Jim promised me some home-packed fruits. They would be better than anything I'd ever tasted.

Bill Corcoran said, "You can't beat a prospector. They put up the best preserves you ever eat. They've got the best mine you ever saw. Their animules is the finest stock in the country. Their car is the fastest thing on four wheels. These fool prospectors make me sick. They think they can do anything. . . . Look at me! I bought a ranch up here in the valley. You should a seen me; a miner tryen to be a farmer! A pullen weeds; an builden fences; an fallen in the ditches! It was terrible.

"I run sheep later. I borrowed money an bought two thousand sheep. We had a hard year. There was no feed for the sheep; so I had to buy feed. But I didn't have any money. So I went to the banker that had the mortgage on the sheep. He owned them, of course. I told him I had to have more money.

"Well . . . he wanted to know what for. I told him. An then he tells me that I already got a lot a money; an times are hard; an money is scarce; an all that sad stuff they tell you when you want to get some money. I see he didn't intend to give me any money.

"I says, 'All right. You be out in front of your bank tomorrow mornen. You be there, sure. I want to see you.'

"An he says, 'What for?'

" 'Why!' I says, 'I want to give you your sheep. I can't feed 'em; an you own 'em; so I'm goen to bring 'em down

an give 'em to you right on the sidewalk in front a your bank!'

"An he says, 'Wait a minute!' An we talked some more an he finally give me some more money. So I fed the sheep an we got through all right. I got a thousand lambs or better in the spring, and we made some money.

"A long time afterwards I was talken with that banker an he says, 'I don't know why I ever gave you that last money.'

"Now! You know that was foolishness. He knew damn well why he gave me that money! He didn't want two thousand sheep on the sidewalk outside his bank. 'Cause he'd a sure got 'em! He could a put them right in the vault. I was sure sick a them sheep."

Only a few scattered ranches remain in Owens Valley. The Los Angeles aqueduct which took Owens Valley water brought the valley the Midland Trail and the railroad by way of recompense. The mines and chemical plants still operate; but Owens Valley's chief industry today is the tourist and the sportsman drawn to the valley by the majesty of the Sierras, their high trails and their sport.

Good hunting to you, Owens Valley!

The Death Valley roads leave Owens Valley around both the north and south shores of Owens Lake. The fork of the Midland Trail at Olancho leads around the south side of the lake over alluvial soil and washes and joins the Lone Pine - Death Valley road east of Keeler. The narrow gauge railroad ends at Keeler. Keeler is an old town. It was there when the government sent the Death Valley Expedition in to report on the geology, the flora, and the fauna of Death Valley. Dr. Frederick Vernon Coville, now Curator of the National Herbarium, was the botanist of the Death

Valley Expedition. He remembers Keeler and Death Valley. The Doctor got the shock of his young life in Keeler.

My partner and I called upon Dr. Coville in Washington City when an earlier story of Death Valley was in preparation. The Doctor is well above average height with the fine eyes and clear, burned skin of an active field worker. Men like Dr. Coville are the stalwarts of our governmental departments. The Doctor was interested in Death Valley. He said, "My! I'd like to go back to that country. We didn't have all the time I could have used. I've wanted to go back, but since my last trip there's always been something else to occupy me." He spoke as though he had been to Death Valley last year, or the year before. The Death Valley Expedition was in the valley in the nineties; and the Doctor has not been there since. He has been busy.

Doctor Coville graciously offered to edit a revised catalogue of Death Valley flora in its manuscript form. He sat at his desk with the manuscript in his hands. His eyes slipped past us and focused brightly upon far off memories. "Strange," said Doctor Coville. He put the manuscript on his desk and his eyes came back to us. "I lost my first manuscript on Death Valley. We'd about finished our survey. I had all my notes in a brief case—all my notes on the plant life of the region—you can imagine the work those notes represented. I had left the other members of the Expedition and was traveling in a buckboard alone. I was going to Keeler. When I arrived at Keeler, my brief case was nowhere in the buckboard. All my notes were gone, jounced out of the buckboard somewhere along the road. I had no idea where, because I had traveled a lot of country since I last remembered seeing my notes. There were hardly

any roads, and almost no one in the country. You can imagine how I felt. My entire contribution to the Death Valley Expedition was gone, and it was my first big job, too. I had a bad time of it in Keeler.

"Late in the afternoon a man rode into Keeler on a horse. Keeler wasn't very big, and you saw everyone who went in or out of town. . . . How big is Keeler, now?"

"You can still see all arrivals and departures."

"Well. . . . This man had come in behind me along my trail. He'd been riding along; and for unknown reasons he was sober." The Doctor smiled. "He saw my brief case beside the trail and picked it up. He had my notes! I was a very happy young man; but, my! what a shock I'd had."

Had Doctor Coville failed to recover his precious notes, there would have been a very real national loss—to say nothing of his own acute sufferings. Those notes, which the strangely sober horseman retrieved, have been the basis of every catalogue of Death Valley plant life. Hundreds of travelers in the Death Valley region have had their pleasure in the growing things heightened because of Doctor Coville's survey. To many people flowers and shrubs are more perfect when their names are known. Less acutely learned folk, who do not know an *Opuntia* from a ham-tree, are more reverential. They never would have believed any desert thing could be so beautiful. But now we've seen the desert flowers. We'll be back next spring.

East of Keeler, on the summit of the divide above the basin of Owens Lake, travelers stop for a last view westward with the Sierra Nevada Range in the western sky. Eastward are the desert mountains, grim and bare, savage in their mass

and their impelling prismatic coloring. The Death Valley Trail drops down the east side of the divide to seek passage through the desert ranges. It finds its way through the Argus Range into Panamint Valley by way of Darwin Wash beyond the town of Darwin.

The Owens Valley settlements are really more than towns, but Darwin is a town. The Death Valley road shoots down from the Owens Lake divide, crosses Darwin's main street, and is again out on the desert heading for Darwin Wash. Darwin is a sprawling score of lonesome buildings at an elevation of forty-seven hundred feet on sweeping slopes of gravel. Ophir Mountain rises at the end of Darwin's main and only street. The Coso Mountains to the southwest rear up Coso Peak and bear the springs which supply Darwin with water. Darwin has a garage, three or four gasoline pumps, a restaurant, and the store. One of Darwin's residents has a few rooms to shelter stranded travelers—and usually those who stop over at Darwin are stranded. Darwin has a forsaken, empty face. Brisk cold winds zip through it during the winter months when the Death Valley travel moves through Darwin. To the casual traveler, it is a group of dwellings on the highway through which the traveler must slow down, avoid stray dogs and somnambulant inhabitants, and search for a signpost pointing the exit from a drab and lonely town. Yet, there is more to Darwin than meets the eye. There are good mines in the Darwin Hills and some of my friends live in Darwin.

Jack Stewart has his headquarters at Darwin. Unless Jack is off on a fishing trip in the Sierras; or out in the hills doing the annual work on some of his claims; or blacksmithing up at the Cerro Gordo Mine; or packing through

the mountains near Bodie looking for gold; or investigating some quicksilver claims around Mina, Nevada; or over in the Cosos to repair the Darwin waterpipe line; or gone after his deer; or out of town selling some investors a Cactus Flat claim; or off playing poker at some unknown hide-out—Jack is always around Darwin. Jack is Honest Jack Stewart and he is not to be confused with Nevada's Fraction Jack.

Honest Jack is lean and sandy with an alert profile that would look well on minted gold. He is tall, and his arms and legs are long and strong with the corded strength of lengthy muscles. A throaty burr mellows Jack's quick, incisive voice as Jack talks. Jack does talk.

Darwin men gather in Darwin's store. Mickey Summers, Dick Wallace, Oliver Thorson, Honest Jack and other Darwin citizens meet in the Darwin store. Their talk is of mines and miners and they have discussions. Their discussions are the sort of discussions men have when they are talking to men. A very ordinary discussion may flower into a fancy discussion. When Cash Clark lived in Darwin, the town used to have orations.

Cash was one of the first men I met in the Death Valley region. Up until four or five years ago you could not go through Darwin and not meet Cash Clark. Cash was Justice of the Peace, but I used to meet him socially. Once I stopped my car in front of Cash's house. I stopped because I was leaving the country and did not know when I would get back. I was in a hurry. Cash came out and told me goodbye in two hours. But I'm glad I stopped. Cash is no longer in Darwin and I have not seen him since that day. He was a whimsical and interesting story teller, Cash Clark's hero in many a whole-souled yarn.

Cash, celebrating a birthday, walked into the Darwin store feeling very light-footed. "Well!" cried Cash, "that's nice. Nice to have people remember you: I just got a wire from Alfonso wishing me many happy returns of the day."

Darwin men said it was nice, Cash. They thought Alfonso was an Owens Valley bootblack, or perhaps a pump tender at the soda works. Cash explained that Alfonso was the King of Spain who remembered Cash's birthday because Cash had built the waterworks at Barcelona. Went all the way to Europe for that one job because Alfonso asked him to. Stayed there six years.

A stranger in Darwin happened to say he was from Springfield. Cash asked, "Springfield, Missouri, or Ohio?" Either answer was correct. Cash had built the waterworks there. That was a four year job.

John Thorndike said, "I was sitting on the roof of my house fixing it and Cash walked by. I said, 'Cash, throw me up some nails.' And he came over and picked up a package of nails and stood looking at them.

"He said, 'Nails. . . . Nails. . . . That reminds me. I got a telegram the other day from one of the executives of Bethlehem Steel. It said for me to buy nails. I'll have to do something about that because that advice came from the same man that sent me a telegram during the war telling me to buy rails. . . . That was how I made my first fortune.'

"Old Cash sure knew a lot of people. He'd done a lot of things in his time. . . . You remember the panic of 1907. Morgan and other financiers got credit for straightening things out afterward. That was a mistake. Cash put the country back on its feet. With the men he'd

known, and the places he'd been, and the things he'd done; Cash must have been over two hundred years old when he left Darwin."

Cash is gone from Darwin; but Honest Jack is still around to lend spirit and imagery to the discussion of problems which engross Darwin men from time to time. There was that question about grizzly bears which interested some of my Darwin friends. Someone in the store had been discoursing on the sagacity of the grizzly. "You fellows who never hunted them don't know how wise the grizzly was," he said. "Many a time I've seen a wounded grizzly stop on the trail and reach around to his wound and get it in his teeth and bite it together. He'd pull the hairs of his hide over the wound and lick the hairs down tight. Then he'd light out again. He knew enough to close up his hurt with the hair from his own hide and his own spittle so he wouldn't leave a blood trail for the hunter to follow."

The audience found fault with the yarn. Clay Murray said, "That ain't wisdom; that's just luck. He thought that gunshot wound was something biting him, so he bit it back. It was just accident he stopped the bleeding."

The pros and cons took up the question and the debate ran through the afternoon. At sundown it was still going on outside the store when Honest Jack Stewart came up the street to make some purchases against supper time. Jimmy Madden hailed him: "Hey! Jack! What do you know about grizzly bears?"

"I am very well acquainted with the habits of the beasts," said Honest Jack of the steady voice and serious mein. "I have hunted the beasts in many sections. Is there something you want to know about grizzly bears?"

They told Jack what they wanted to know. Did grizzly

bears bite their wounds in blind anger, or did they deliberately staunch the flow of blood to cover their escape across hard trails?

Jack said, "I will tell you a little experience I had with a bear, and then you may all judge for yourselves." The throaty burr crept into Jack's voice. "It was in British Columbia. We were short of meat in camp and my partner went out to shoot a cariboo. He found no cariboo; but he did most unexpectedly find an enormous bear. He shot the bear and wounded it. He had never shot a bear before and he was unwilling to track this bear alone. So he most wisely returned to our camp to get me to assist him. He knew that I was most expert with the rifle and had enjoyed a wide experience with the beasts.

"I took the gun away from him as it was the only gun we had, and I took up the trail of the bear. My partner was sure he had wounded the bear but I could find no blood along the trail. But I followed the bear swiftly, being a most expert tracker, and I soon overtook him. I killed him with a single shot. When I examined that dead bear I saw that my partner had told the truth about wounding the bear, and I was not long in discovering why there was no blood along the trail.

"Do you know! That bear had a belt around him; and the belt was full of wooden plugs of all sizes that would fit any hole from a .22 to a .45 slug!" And Jack flung away a yard of tobacco juice and went into the store to make his purchases against supertime.

Jack never lacks an answer or a solution.

There was that night a simple newspaper item provoked a Darwin reader. It was one of those items newspapers have to print again and again. Someone falls out a window

and a telephone line or a clothesline or an awning breaks the fall and the tumbler escapes unhurt. The stories are all alike. Only the tumbler's name and address changes.

The Darwin reader flung down the paper and protested. "I wish they'd stop printing that story," he exclaimed. "Nobody but a fool would believe a heavy man could fall three or four stories and be saved by a clothesline. He could fall through clotheslines all the way down and they'd still have to dig him out."

"No," said Honest Jack. "It is entirely within the realms of possibility. . . . I was in Australia in a new mining town. There was a boom on and some of us were boisterous and the police came after us. We separated and with my usual good forrtune the cops all decided to follow me. I rran like the wind for my hotel. But the Australian police are also verry excellent runners and they were close behind me as I went up the stairs. When I got inside my room I was desperate. Without giving the matter a moment's thought I jumped out the window. My room was on the fifth floor. . . .

"Forrtunately, the hotel in which I was stopping and the building next door were verry close together. There was a very narrow space between those two buildings. After I jumped from my window I bounced back and forth from building to building. Ggradually, I worked my way down. I lit with hardly a jarr and strolled up the street to rejoin my boisterous friends. . . . There is a fine climate in some parts of Australia."

Silence, wistful sighs and a strong light of appreciation in the eyes of his listeners; these are Jack Stewart's applause in Darwin.

Darwin is the hometown of another artist. This artist

is a miner who is also a jeweler. He shall be nameless here. His nuggets are made at home by loving hands. A piece of rock, some gold foil, and clever, painstaking fingers can build a splendid nugget of gold. The Jeweler's nuggets have deceived men who should have been wiser. The Jeweler's masterpiece, perhaps, was the watchchain of nuggets he sold to the superintendent of an Arizona mine.

Darwin knew this super. He was an especially well informed superintendent. Graduated from a school of mines and working some claims which his family controlled, he visited Darwin and told Darwin's rock-bitten miners all about the mines. Darwin listened to him because he was so full of knowledge. The visiting superintendent was captivated by a watchchain of nuggets the Jeweler had wrought. The Jeweler sold him the watchchain at the bargain price of one hundred dollars. A down payment of sixty dollars clinched the sale and the super departed happily for Arizona with the chain of beaten nuggets.

The Jeweler waited a reasonable period for the forty dollar balance and when the superintendent did not appear to pay the balance the Jeweler hunted him up. He found a very irate superintendent.

The super said, "You're a damned thief! I want my sixty dollars back and if I hear any more about my owing you forty dollars on that watch chain, I'll have you arrested!"

"Let's have no rough talken," said the Jeweler. "How can you have me arrested? What for?"

"For selling me that phoney chain! That's what for!"

"Aw hell," said the Jeweler mildly. "You bought the chain. You're a minen superintendent. You know all about gold. How could I sell you a phoney gold chain?"

If you don't pay up that forty dollars you owe me, I'll have to talk to the boys and get their advice about how to collect from you."

The Jeweler got his forty dollar balance, but the superintendent never wore his handmade chain of handsome nuggets.

Darwin is the last town along the road to the west gate of Lost Valley. Beyond Darwin the badlands begin. From Darwin forward through the Death Valley country the springs and waterholes are as important to the traveler as the resorts and settlements of the region. Two roads leave Darwin to reach Darwin Wash which descends an Argus Range cañon toward Panamint Valley. One road swings directly out of Darwin to leap like a goat over Lane Hill. There are mines along the Lane Hill road. I used to use the Lane Hill road. It was shorter than the more sensible road which swings out of Darwin to skirt the hills and follow easy grades down into Darwin Wash. And then one day I met a five-ton ore truck on the Lane Hill road. We were on a pitching shelf and there was no room to turn out. The truck grunting up the steep grade in low gear had the right of way. I backed up and around the shoulder of the hill to the turn-off. The longer road out of Darwin to Darwin Wash is a gentler road. There are fewer thrills and you see more of the country.

Dropping down along the gravel in the cañon which holds Darwin Wash the high rough walls crowd in upon the road. The rugged cañon is carved in solid rock. The exposed strata are deformed and shattered and enormous curlicues, like giant Arabic script, adorn the eroded Argus cliffs. The gods kicked the Argus mountains around when they were young and soft. Jumbled masses of battered

rock threaten the cañon. The cañon is only a prelude to the madly distorted barrens beyond Zinc Hill to the east.

The road must climb over Zinc Hill because Darwin Wash and its cañon end in a series of waterfalls. The falls are not dry desert falls. Water tumbles over them. There is always water underneath the gravel of Darwin Wash and the Darwin Falls never go dry. Few people see them. The emigrants did not find them. The falls are twenty minutes off the beaten road beyond Zinc Hill. A car can be driven part way up the streambed until the gravel becomes too soft.

A natural bathtub is carved in the rock floor of the cañon below the falls and the water descends a series of pretty cascades shaded by willows. The bathtub is always full of surprisingly cold water. But the air sweeps in warmly from Panamint Valley and dries you before you can reach for your towel.

I made my first visit to Darwin Falls beneath Zinc Hill because I wanted to see the wild melon vines. The cañon, I was told, was full of melons—and figs—and apricots. My informant was not sure but that there might be oranges growing there.

"How come?" I asked. "How do all these fruits happen to be growing on the edge of Panamint Valley?"

"A Chinaman used to farm over in the cañon," said Herman. "He was in Darwin Wash above the falls. His house perched up against the side of the cañon and his little farm was down in the wash. He had plenty of water and grew fruits and vegetables to peddle in Darwin. He did quite a business in the days when the mines were going. He got along fine until a cloudburst hit back of Darwin and thousands of tons of water went down the wash and over the falls. The fruits took root below the falls."

I found no edible luxuriance below the Darwin Falls but I did find the bathtub. The water from Darwin Falls does not get far. It leaves the falls bravely with a gurgled song as it runs down the cañon through silt, gravel and boulders toward the hot basin of Panamint Valley. The volume of water in the stream bed diminishes with every rod the stream advances down the cañon slope. Soon the stream is only a trickle of water. Its song dies. The stream is a damp spot in the cañon. The stream is gone. Dry winds curl up the cañon from Panamint Valley.

From the top of Zinc Hill, over which the Death Valley road staggers in a repeated switchback, Panamint Valley is a glowing crucible of hot lead. Not many travelers enjoy the view from Zinc Hill the first time they go over it. The scene crashes upon their vision suddenly when they are fully occupied with the road. The road is steep and it is narrow. The Zinc Hill road is the visitor's first intimate experience with the scenery he has been watching along the trail to Death Valley. All up along the Midland Trail, through Owens Valley, there have been the Sierra Mountains, handsome, jagged and majestic. Along his road from Owens Valley to Darwin have been other mountains, somber and impressive. But at Zinc Hill the traveler walks up to one of the desert hills and shakes hands with it. The traveler is well along on the trail to Death Valley and its Lost Valley gate. To get into the valley he must climb over some of the scenery. The scenery loses nothing in impressiveness upon this closer acquaintanceship, but the motorist will see less and less of it. The wise driver sees nothing but the road. At Zinc Hill some of the passengers will help him watch it.

Sunk deeply below the Panamint Range and the Argus Mountains, Panamint Valley is a massive desert sink. Sixty

miles long and from two to twelve miles wide, Panamint Basin is an awesome rival to the terrorsome Death Valley of legend. Men have died here, too. Cloudbursts sweep the stones from their shallow graves. Panamint distances are great. The mountains bulk darkly above the playas in the bottom of the vast empty basin. Mud hills break the lower bleak horizons. Gravel fans, two thousand feet high, stream into the valley from the dull and somber mountains. Sand storms sweep through its length. Panamint Valley is sullen. Its color tones are dead. Throughout the entire sixty miles of the valley, in all the one hundred and thirty miles of mountains which enclose the valley, only one mountain is brightly caparisoned. Calico Mountain in the Panamints just east across the valley from Darwin Wash is gay with sashes of primitive color. The other hills look weary.

Four mountain ranges are merged to enclose Panamint Valley. The Inyo Range, which guards Owens Valley on the east, swings around to close the northern end of Panamint Valley. The cliffs of the Panamint Range front Panamint Valley on the east. On the west side of Panamint Valley, the Argus Range extends north and south and its northern tip abuts upon the Inyo Range. Farther south in Panamint Valley, where the Argus Range curves to the west, the Slate Range becomes the western wall of the valley. The valley floor is from one thousand to one thousand six hundred feet above the sea. The gloomy mountains carry their crest belts from five to nine thousand feet above the valley. The south end of the valley is open at an elevation of two thousand feet. Panamint Valley is the empty trough of an ancient lake. Strong winds laden with fine sand sweep through the valley. Heavy rains in

the Argus Range and on the higher slopes of the Panamints regularly remove the roads across the washes. Panamint Valley has a forsaken air. Solitude lives there. Yet, people live there too. The valley has an old mining town.

Ballarat, dating back to early mining days, is now only a dozen houses standing on the wash close against the rocks of the Panamint Range at the mouth of Pleasant Cañon. Time was when Ballarat knew exciting life—and sudden death. The town, unlike some of its earlier inhabitants dies lingeringly. Metal built Ballarat; metal removed some of its residents; metal holds those who linger on. Men work mines in the Panamint cañons above Ballarat. Eight or nine people live in Ballarat. Motion picture directors in search of realism have spoiled many cans of film in the town. Unattractive Ballarat has the sullen mood of the valley which holds it. Ballarat has none of the glamour of a ghost town because it is not a ghost town. Ballarat is a corpse. The Panamints should fall on it and bury it.

Forlorn Ballarat knew rougher and tougher and happier days. Chris Wicht and Harry Porter and John Thorndike, who still live in the Panamints—but not at Ballarat, remember the happier days of Ballarat. Shorty Harris and Fred Gray and Rattlesnake Dick and a score of others remember Ballarat. Remembering Ballarat, they speak of Sailor McCoy.

God called Sailor McCoy and sent him to Death Valley to save the souls of the hard drinking, hard living, hardrock miners. Sailor McCoy got as far as Ballarat on his mission of righteousness and found his work all blocked out for him there. Sailor had been to sea in the days when sailors were not as wooden as the present model, but the hardrock men

of Ballarat were too flinty for Sailor's tools. The sun or the sea had softened Sailor's brain and drawn the temper from his disposition. Sailor was too mild for Ballarat. The boys laughed at Sailor and his preachings of reformation. All except Harry Porter. Harry never laughed at Sailor McCoy. Harry felt sorry for Sailor and was always kind to him.

Sailor McCoy used to get supplies in Trona. Trona is a town on the edge of Searles Lake, west across Panamint Valley and the Slate Range from Ballarat. Sailor would intercept some Ballarat resident on his way to Trona and say, "Here's a list of some things I want you to get me in Trona. I'll thank you for your kindness, and the Lord will bless you."

"Where's the money to pay for this stuff, Sailor?"

Sailor said, "Just charge them to God."

I was talking to John Thorndike about Sailor McCoy, and John said, "The first time I knew Sailor was in Ballarat was one day I went to chop some wood outside Chris Wicht's place. I picked up the axe and the handle of the axe said, 'Jesus loves you.' I was kinda surprised. Sailor was great for going around painting signs on things.

"The boys in Ballarat kept Sailor for a long time. Then things began to slow up and money was hard to get. Harry Porter was about the only one who'd take Sailor's orders for grub over to Trona and charge the stuff to God. One day Sailor told Harry to get him two pounds of cheese, and Harry came back with one pound. Sailor was cross. He said he'd ordered two pounds.

"Harry Porter said, 'I know, Sailor, but God's credit has kinda dropped off in Trona.' Sailor thought he was in the midst of the heathen.

the Argus Range and on the higher slopes of the Panamints regularly remove the roads across the washes. Panamint Valley has a forsaken air. Solitude lives there. Yet, people live there too. The valley has an old mining town.

Ballarat, dating back to early mining days, is now only a dozen houses standing on the wash close against the rocks of the Panamint Range at the mouth of Pleasant Cañon. Time was when Ballarat knew exciting life—and sudden death. The town, unlike some of its earlier inhabitants dies lingeringly. Metal built Ballarat; metal removed some of its residents; metal holds those who linger on. Men work mines in the Panamint cañons above Ballarat. Eight or nine people live in Ballarat. Motion picture directors in search of realism have spoiled many cans of film in the town. Unattractive Ballarat has the sullen mood of the valley which holds it. Ballarat has none of the glamour of a ghost town because it is not a ghost town. Ballarat is a corpse. The Panamints should fall on it and bury it.

Forlorn Ballarat knew rougher and tougher and happier days. Chris Wicht and Harry Porter and John Thorndike, who still live in the Panamints—but not at Ballarat, remember the happier days of Ballarat. Shorty Harris and Fred Gray and Rattlesnake Dick and a score of others remember Ballarat. Remembering Ballarat, they speak of Sailor McCoy.

God called Sailor McCoy and sent him to Death Valley to save the souls of the hard drinking, hard living, hardrock miners. Sailor McCoy got as far as Ballarat on his mission of righteousness and found his work all blocked out for him there. Sailor had been to sea in the days when sailors were not as wooden as the present model, but the hardrock men

of Ballarat were too flinty for Sailor's tools. The sun or the sea had softened Sailor's brain and drawn the temper from his disposition. Sailor was too mild for Ballarat. The boys laughed at Sailor and his preachings of reformation. All except Harry Porter. Harry never laughed at Sailor McCoy. Harry felt sorry for Sailor and was always kind to him.

Sailor McCoy used to get supplies in Trona. Trona is a town on the edge of Searles Lake, west across Panamint Valley and the Slate Range from Ballarat. Sailor would intercept some Ballarat resident on his way to Trona and say, "Here's a list of some things I want you to get me in Trona. I'll thank you for your kindness, and the Lord will bless you."

"Where's the money to pay for this stuff, Sailor?"

Sailor said, "Just charge them to God."

I was talking to John Thorndike about Sailor McCoy, and John said, "The first time I knew Sailor was in Ballarat was one day I went to chop some wood outside Chris Wicht's place. I picked up the axe and the handle of the axe said, 'Jesus loves you.' I was kinda surprised. Sailor was great for going around painting signs on things.

"The boys in Ballarat kept Sailor for a long time. Then things began to slow up and money was hard to get. Harry Porter was about the only one who'd take Sailor's orders for grub over to Trona and charge the stuff to God. One day Sailor told Harry to get him two pounds of cheese, and Harry came back with one pound. Sailor was cross. He said he'd ordered two pounds.

"Harry Porter said, 'I know, Sailor, but God's credit has kinda dropped off in Trona.' Sailor thought he was in the midst of the heathen.

"Sailor was fond of Harry because Harry was always nice to him. Harry was working his mine up in Pleasant Cañon back of town. He used to stay up there for long periods. One time he was up the cañon long enough to let Sailor do a good job of painting in the cañon. When Harry started down the cañon below his mine he saw all the rocks carrying big signs in yellow paint. All the way down the cañon, Harry read these signs. They said: 'Jesus loves Harry Porter.' All the way down the mountain to Ballarat. It was too much for Harry. He got firm with Sailor and made him paint out all the signs.

"Poor old Sailor McCoy. He passed on. He wanted so hard to do good. But he was a little impractical."

Not far north of Ballarat, Surprise Cañon cuts into the Panamint Range. Chris Wicht lives in Surprise Cañon in a neat house on a little shelf above the cañon. Chris has piped water down the cañon from the springs above him and the water power lights his house. The water sings from the pipe and runs down the cañon below him. Chris built the shelf his house stands on. He worked alone erecting a stone retaining wall and piling earth behind it with a wheelbarrow. Chris said, "There were weeks when you couldn't see what I'd done. I felt as though I was putting that dirt in there with a teaspoon." But Chris has a nice home now, and a splendid library. Chris ran the poor man's club in Ballarat when the mines were working. "I used to take in a hundred an fifty dollars a day when the town was going good. An then things got slack, an I stayed around until I had to borrow fifty dollars to get out with."

Chris is mayor ex-officio of Panamint City, a town up seven thousand feet at the head of Surprise Cañon. This is the town where William M. Stewart and John P. Jones

spent millions they had taken from the Comstock Lode in looking for another mine. They found some silver and the bandits were so thick that Stewart had the silver made up in cannon balls so that it was not to be easily stolen. The bandit chieftain complained to Stewart about the cannon balls of silver. The bandits didn't think it sporting. Some of the old stone cabins of the seventies still stand in Panamint and there are other newer houses, one of them with a bath. Panamint is deserted. The last mine operators cut a tunnel through two thousand feet of rock in 1926 and found nothing at the end of their tunnel.

The grade up the cañon from Chris Wicht's place to Panamint City is a low gear road with little pitches. Panamint men call them little pitches. A car descends these little pitches in low gear with plenty of brakes. Some cars don't go up the little pitches at all. The mountain sheep are at home in Surprise Cañon. I have jumped bands of seven and nine sheep in a single morning. The sheep water in the cañon. Few cars make the trip up the long grade with the little pitches. Most of the old relics of Death Valley's first boom town have been picked up. Jimmy Madden has an old invoice from the office of the Panamint storekeeper. The invoice calls for "one Desk and one pair of Scales; two Smith and Wesson Revolvers, and twenty-five hundred rounds of Ammunition for Same; two Colt Revolvers, and twenty-five hundred rounds of Ammunition for Same; twelve Rifles, and six thousand rounds of Ammunition for Same." The invoice is dated in 1875 and is headed Office Supplies. That's the kind of a town Panamint was.

Panamint Valley's oldest habitation is the Indian Ranch at the base of the Panamint Range opposite the mouth of

Jail Cañon. A marsh lies in the valley below the ranch. The ranch is as old as the Indians. Known as Indian Ranch; Warm Spring George's; Panamint Ranch; Panamint George's; the Indian Ranch has been there as long as men can remember. Straggling fences enclose a small acreage of land and several houses designed by Dr. Caligari. The houses, the land and the fences are in the complete disorder so dear to the Indian heart. Panamint George lives at the ranch now with Isabelle and Mabel and the Old Woman to keep him company. Panamint George is an old Indian. George came to Panamint Valley when Telescope Peak was a hole in the ground.

For many years the Indians at Indian Ranch owned profitable herds of goats and inquisitive sheep came down from the high Panamints to visit the goats on the ranch. The slovenly fence about the ranch was sufficient to restrain the captive goats but it was not high enough to even break the stride of a bighorn sheep from the hills. The strain of the goats at the ranch improved.

One of the Indians brought a foundling wild sheep into the ranch, and Panamint George obtained permission from the Fish and Game Commission to retain and raise the orphan. The bighorn thrived upon the luxuries of the ranch and quickly grew to full size. He was a guest, and he knew it. He often stubbed his toe on the fences when he was leaping over the houses for light exercise. But the hills finally called him and he left. The Indians did not see him for a year. The buxom Mabel discovered him one day back on the ranch feeding with the goats. Mabel thought the bighorn was ungrateful to accept all their hospitality and then go away and stay so long. Mabel spoke to the bighorn about it.

"Hah! You big bum!" said Mabel. "Where you been? Hey!"

Mabel picked up a willow staff and smacked the bighorn on his brisket. Jealous of his dignity, the bighorn catapulted himself at Mabel. There ensued ten minutes of low comedy with a freeborn bighorn sheep and a large and very fat Indian squaw as the principals. Mabel, with the bighorn's assistance, miraculously achieved the top of a haystack and sat there squalling lustily for rescue. Reinforcements started to the relief of Mabel but were overcome by the spectacle of Mabel on her haystack and the outraged bighorn standing below her daring her to come down. To the accompaniment of gusty Indian laughter the bighorn left the ranch. Swiftly, he took himself over the fences and went effortlessly up the Panamints. On a jutting point he checked his plunging climb and looked down on the Indian Ranch. It was a strange place where large black howling creatures beat you with sticks for no reason. The bighorn had never been on Indian Ranch before. He would never go there again.

Mabel's little mistake in the identity of the bighorn sheep is one of the bright spots in the later history of the Indian Ranch. Its later story is largely one of struggle and decline. The young Indians are gone to the towns and the ranch is a great burden to the old people already heavy with years. In 1929 the streams from the Panamint springs which supply the ranch with water no longer flowed through the ditch down the lower Panamint slopes to the fields under fence. The ditch was cut in the gravel of the wash and carried water only as long as it was lined with clay. The clay lining wore away and there were no young people on the ranch to gather clay on the playa, pack the

clay up the slope and reline the ditch to make it watertight. Panamint George's appeals to the Indian agent won him promises. Cash Clark, whose persuasive oratorical powers had obtained many things for the Indians, was gone from Darwin. The promises of the Indian agent did not bring water to Indian Ranch. The cumbersome governmental machinery moved very slowly toward the relief of Indian Ranch. Meanwhile Panamint George and Indian Ranch were without water. All the Death Valley country knew it. In Joburg, in Darwin, in Searles Basin and Owens Valley, men asked me: "Has Panamint George got his water yet?" Men camped at Leach Spring, men mining in Wingate Pass, men in Shoshone, Death Valley Junction, and along the Amargosa Desert, men in Furnace Creek Canon, Beatty, and Goldfield, asked: "Any signs of the government doen anythen about getten Old George his water?"

"Not yet," I said.

Death Valley men know the Indian Ranch. When desert travel was done on foot, the old Indian Ranch was an important oasis. Surveyors and geologists camped there. Miners stopped there. The stages and freighters driving between Johannesburg and Skidoo went through Indian Ranch. Men staggered into Indian Ranch far gone with sun and thirst. Fools full of whiskey were revived on the ranch. More than idle curiosity prompted the desert men to ask about Old George and his water. Desert men had been fed and watered at Indian Ranch.

Two men came down out of the Panamint Range and walked along the ditch which no longer fed water to the ranch. The break in the ditch was about one-quarter of a mile long. Water came down the trench to a stretch of raw gravel where the clay lining was entirely worn away

and there the water disappeared in the porous wash. The two Panamint men went to work. They gave their labor and used their cars for trucking. They mixed concrete on the wash. They reconditioned the water ditch and gave it a permanent lining. Indian Ranch again had water. Panamint men are not ungrateful.

Government wheels creaked slowly around through the months. Indian Ranch was awarded one hundred dollars for the repair of the broken ditch. The two Panamint men had done three hundred dollars worth of work, but they did not complain: Panamint George and Indian Ranch had water.

Kudos! Fred Gray and Bob Warnock! *Kudos!*

East beyond the Panamint Range is Death Valley. Two roads cross the range from the northern end of Panamint Valley. A toll road begins in Panamint Valley joining the county road from Darwin at the foot of Darwin Wash, bumping across the playa on the bottom of Panamint Valley and climbing the Panamint Range through Townsend Pass. Toll road charges are two dollars and a half for a car and driver; and fifty cents for each passenger. Many automobiles cross the toll road in the months between October and May when Death Valley holds open house; but the toll road charges are not popular with all the travelers who ride over the road. Some have stopped to inscribe caustic comments on the toll road gates. Motorists who are constitutionally opposed to all toll roads turn southeast in Panamint Valley to follow the county road across the playa and some low hills and ascend Wildrose Cañon to Wildrose Spring and Harrisburg Flats. The Wildrose road is the older road along which the freighters traveled from Johannesburg by

way of Trona and Ballarat past the Indian Ranch and up Wildrose Cañon to the mines in Tucki Mountain at Skidoo.

Manuel Rogers freighted between Johannesburg and Skidoo. Manuel was eighteen or nineteen when he drove ten and twelve horses along the old road from Joburg through Trona to drop down the Slate Range into Panamint Valley. Flying an airplane is child's play compared to taking twelve horses, a freight wagon and trailer, and a heavy load down the Slate Range into Panamint Valley. The road from Trona climbs to the Slate Range crest and pauses on the summit. Below is all Panamint Valley. The Panamint Range is an apparently vertical wall seven to nine thousand feet high. There is the valley below and the vertical Panamints; that is all. Single valley and single range are foreground, middleground, and background. The scene is twelve miles deep done in browns and dull blues. Imagination cannot visualize the size of the scene. One valley and one range. Big.

The road down the Slate Range is a low-gear, one-way road with turnouts. It is carved in solid rock and does not wash out. Descending or ascending the Slate Range in low gear the car driver catches glimpses of the old freighters' road taking shortcuts across the loops of the switchback auto road. Freighters' horses did not have to shift gears. Horses had the will to work.

Talking with Manuel Rogers, I asked, "How in the world did you ever control twelve horses going down that grade? You drove with a jerk line, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Manuel. "We had fine horses. We trained them good. Every horse had his name. He knew his name. At the top of the hill I would log up,—fix the wheels with a log and chain so the wheel would skid, not roll. We

would start down. I speak to my horses by name. I tell one to do something; and the others don't do nothing. Fine horses, we had. Many trips I made from Joburg to Skidoo; and never any accidents."

In Wildrose Cañon, above Dan Driscoll's house at Wildrose Spring, the old freight road forks. The south fork leads on up Wildrose Cañon to John Thorndike's camp close to the Panamint crest near Telescope Peak. John's camp is among the pines and junipers and mountain mahogany. Many springs pour water into the upper reaches of Wildrose Cañon. The air is sparkling desert mountain air, and John Thorndike's camp above seven thousand feet sits very close to the top of the world. The ridge just beyond John's place looks down Death Valley Cañon into Death Valley and a foot and horse trail lead up the backbone of the ridge to the top of Baldy ten thousand feet above Death Valley. Telescope Peak at eleven thousand feet is south across a saddle from Baldy and a stiffer climb. The last thousand feet up Telescope are stiff. But either Baldy or Telescope Peak lifts the traveler very close to the seats of the gods. John Thorndike and his Wildrose Camp will be famous as soon as people find them. Here is a summer resort a mile and a half in the air above Death Valley. Death Valley men meet there in the summer. The Indians come up out of the valley heat and camp in Wildrose. Ballarat men camp under the trees. Over the ridge Death Valley burns with heat, baking new colors on the ranges.

"Panamint Valley's hot, too," said John Thorndike. "The hottest day I ever knew was in Panamint. Fred Gray and I were driving to Trona. Usually in the summer we cross the valley at night, but this time we went across in the daytime. Say! It was hot. We were out in the

middle of the valley heading for the grade over the Slate Range. I never felt anything like that heat. I was burning up, actually getting scorched. Finally I says, 'Fred, this is terrible, this heat.' And Fred said, 'Hotter than I ever felt before.' We drove along a little way and I said, 'Mygod! I can't stand this heat. I'm burning up.' And then we both turned around and looked back, and the whole top of the car was on fire. Some hot coals from my pipe. . . ."

Close to Wildrose Spring two roads leave Wildrose Cañon to climb north to Harrisburg Flats. One road leaves the cañon just above Dan Driscoll's house, and the other leaves the cañon close to the cabin of Ed McSparren. Up on Harrisburg Flats the old trails run to Skidoo and to Emigrant Pass. The old Harrisburg road has been extended to the summit of the range at Augerberry Point commanding Death Valley. Pete Augerberry has built himself a tidy home beside the road to the viewpoint named after him. French Pete has been in the Panamints for a long time. His mine is not far from his house around the shoulder of a draw. Every now and then Pete gets tired of mining and almost decides to give it up. He gets hungry for the rustle and bustle of the city and wants to leave the quiet of the hills. When Pete gets feeling that way he is ready to sell his mine for a song.

Mines were active in Skidoo in 1906. Shorty Harris had found Harrisburg the year before. All the Death Valley mines were booming. And men heard that Pete Augerberry was sick and tired of mining. He was anxious to sell out the Cashier Gold Mining Company. Pete had some good ore. It was seven feet wide in the vein and it ran forty and fifty dollars a ton; and some of it ran a dollar

and a half. A man went to see French Pete about buying his mine. He was looking for a bargain because he had heard that Pete was so anxious to get free of all this mining.

Pete said, "Sure, I'll sell. I want to get rid of this mine. My price is fifty thousand dollars; ten thousand cash, and the balance in six months. I want you to put on three shifts of men with me in charge."

Pete made a sale right there. The purchaser was laughing some when he got back to Rhyolite. He said that Pete was real anxious to sell all right, but he knew just what terms he would sell on. Seventy thousand dollars went on deposit in the John S. Cook Bank of Rhyolite to complete the transfer of Pete's Cashier Gold Mine to the new owners. When word of the sale got out, Pete had a lawsuit on his hands. He had been dickering with other mine operators who claimed a prior option to the mine and threw the case into court. It was still in court when Rhyolite and the Death Valley mines all died. In May, 1930, my partner and I sought refuge from a drenching spring rain in Pete Augerberry's trim home alongside the road to Augerberry Point. Pete said, "I'm tired of mining and this country is getting on my nerves. I'd like to get back into a city for a while."

North across Harrisburg Flats, past the road to Skidoo where Sam Ball lives and Judge Gray has his free milling gold ore all blocked out, the old freight trail drops down Emigrant Cañon. Below Upper and Lower Emigrant Spring, the road leaves Emigrant Cañon to emerge on Emigrant Wash down which it skitters into Lost Valley. Of the two roads between the foot of Darwin Wash and Lost Valley, the toll road is the quicker route, the Wildrose-Emigrant Cañon route is the more interesting.

My partner drove in from Los Angeles to Lost Valley in 1928. She made the trip alone in an old female Ford roadster named Henrietta which was my partner's pride and her delight. She ended Henrietta's first day of travel to Death Valley at Little Lake on the Midland Trail. Starting early in the morning she took the Death Valley fork at Olancho and chugged on to Darwin where she sought the water level route around the hills into Darwin Wash. On the Zinc Hill grade Henrietta balked. The gravel on one of the turns was soft and Henrietta sat down on her rear axle. My partner dug gravel with a spark plug wrench and chided Henrietta, and eventually won firm footing and a new start up the hill. Urged on by my partner's conversation Henrietta conquered Zinc Hill and rolled down into Panamint Valley to take the toll road with the bit in her teeth. My partner and Henrietta made the trip from Little Lake into Lost Valley in six hours. The gravel at the foot of Zinc Hill was the one hardship they endured.

My partner said, "That's one of the nicest rides I ever had. I didn't hurry; I just bumbled along and had a grand time. I filled up with gas in Darwin and stopped three times climbing up over the toll road. My feet got tired climbing the toll road."

"Your feet got tired?" I asked. "What were you doing, pushing that fool car?" My acquaintance with Henrietta was limited to winding her up on cold mornings and I was not fond of her.

"No, I wasn't pushing," said my partner. "I was in low gear. My left foot got tired holding down low gear; and then I used my right foot; and then I used both feet. I was in low gear for nine miles."

"How many times did you boil?" I asked.

"She didn't boil at all," said my partner indignantly. "It was cold on the hill today and I stopped three times on the grade to cool off. I didn't wait for her to boil."

"One of these exceptional Fords," I said. "One of these unusually good Fords."

"Never mind," said my partner. "She's a grand car. Maybe we'll take you for a ride some day."

I never got my ride. Henrietta got into fast company over in Beatty, Nevada, and came to a bad end. A speed merchant bent Henrietta too fast around a corner in the road and Henrietta did three barrel rolls. But Henrietta was no airplane, and Henrietta's bones are bleaching in the desert sands.

The toll road climbs between the warmly banded bulk of Calico Mountain and the more southerly knob of Pinto Peak to thirty-four hundred feet above Panamint Valley and five thousand feet above the bottom of Lost Valley. The western horizon, beyond the fog filled sink of Panamint Basin in the foreground, holds the peaks of the Argus and Inyo Mountains, and beyond them to the west the snow-draped Sierras fill the skyline with their serrated profile dulled by distance. To the east lies Lost Valley, the northern fishhook extension of Death Valley. Lost Valley is usually enveloped in haze, a lemon mist touched with dull blue and shot with dull reds and blacks. From the Panamint summit Lost Valley looks small and gentle. As the road descends the east side of the Panamints the mountains dress themselves in paint and the haze of Lost Valley is dispelled by shafts of bright light which bring the mountains of the Amargosa Range on the east side of Death Valley into sharp relief. Plunging down the toll road into Lost Valley, the valley, with its tawny dunes and the steellike spread of its

gravel fans and the flat white of its mesquite-dotted playa, loses its first gentle countenance. The mountains lift themselves upward and retreat before the descending car. The expanse of Lost Valley increases as the naked ranges step backward and upward. Lost Valley becomes brazen and vast and the sky comes down to rest the driven fluff of clouds on the sharp hills and seal the valley in. The first glimpse of the buildings of the Lost Valley resort at the foot of Tucki Mountain is very comforting to a driver who has been on the road all day. Even a toll gate is welcome.

I sat at the toll gate one December evening. The Panamints had slid their shadows across Lost Valley and were slowly lifting their distorted silhouette up the Death Valley face of the Amargosa Range. A veil of clouds played with the wind high above the valley and drank the colors flung at them by the setting sun until they were giddy. Lost Valley was deep in shadow and very still.

An avalanche came down the toll road from the Panamints. I heard it coming far back in the hills. It shuddered and clashed and rumbled down the road. When it was still several miles up the road its roar died away in a gulch. And then the clatter and bang of its descent began anew as it tumbled down the road to the toll gate. The avalanche stopped at the toll gate. Six Mexicans got out of it and I went over to look at the avalanche. It was a poor relation to the late Henrietta of fond memory. Once it had been a light delivery model with a seat and top in front and a flat body with shallow sideboards and a tailgate behind. Now it was just a Mexican desert Ford, carrying a Baja California license. Three Mexicans rode in the seat and three stretched out on their backs on the bare boards behind and sped along in luxurious comfort.

One of the Mexicans spoke limited English and acted as treasurer and guide for the party. They were on their way to the big dam the Americanos were building at Las Vegas. I told them they were a little early, perhaps two years too early. All right. They would go look. If they were too soon and no work went on, they would wait around until work on the dam began. They were not going to turn around and go back to Lower California just because there was no work in Las Vegas. There was plenty of no work in Baja California, too.

The Mexicans went into the store to buy some candy and took their treasurer with them. I looked over the car. It was far gone. No spare tire. No canteen of water. No extra gasoline or oil. No food. No bedding. Probably no tools. The radiator was leaking quarts per minute. When the English speaking guide came back I pointed out the stream of water flowing from the radiator.

I said, "Don't you want to fix that water leak? It's pretty bad. Beatty's the next town and it's thirty-five miles. You'll have to climb over that mountain." And I showed him the Amargosa Range and Daylight Pass behind the three Death Valley Buttes which now stood very upright and very close in the flooding blue light of afterglow.

He looked at the mountain and looked at the leak. He got down on his knees and held a cupped hand in the escaping water. He arose and carefully smelled the water. He nodded at me and smiled. He said, "Yes, it's water." He threw away the water, dried his hand on his pants and ordered gasoline.

Paying for the gasoline, this nonchalant desert traveler tendered a ten dollar bill. The attendant added the gasoline cost to the toll charge of five dollars and gave the

Mexican his change. It wasn't much change but the treasurer of the dam expedition counted it five or six times. According to his Mexican-American figuring he was short five dollars and he said so.

"Toll," said the attendant. "Two dollars for the car, fifty cents for each man, five dollars."

Toll was a new word. The Mexicans talked it over. They told their interpreter questions to ask. He asked them. Gradually they all got the word toll associated with the road. Yes, they had come over the road. It went up and it came down. Bumpy but nice. But they were all through with the road. They did not want the road any more. They would rather have their five dollars.

After a prolonged harangue the Mexicans were firmly sent forth down the road from the toll gate. They did not get their five dollars and they went off into the dusk with their radiator streaming and their voices calling descriptive remarks which did not sound well in the unmusical ululations of their excited bastard Spanish.

The six Mexicans who wanted to help build Boulder Dam undoubtedly reached Las Vegas without the slightest difficulty. Americans could not get five miles in the desert avalanche those Mexicans were driving. A Mexican, however, has the gift of driving any car anywhere. Complete breakdown miles from the nearest habitation leaves him undisturbed. He quietly sits. Someone will come along.

The toll road and the county road from Panamint Valley enter Lost Valley side by side. Grouped on the washes of Mosaic Cañon and Emigrant Wash are the buildings of Stovepipe Well Hotel. The resort includes a gasoline station, a store, a dining room, a U-shaped hotel building and a number of cabins widely spaced on the gravel fan.

East of the resort are the sand dunes with the Death Valley Buttes and the Amargosa Range behind them. The flat of Lost Valley stretches away to the north between the Panamint and Grapevine Mountains. A rough auto trail runs north in Lost Valley to join the road through Grapevine Cañon and Death Valley Scotty's place. Other roads leave the foot of Emigrant Wash to travel east to Daylight Pass and the town of Beatty; to wind southward along the Panamint washes across Salt Creek to the ruins of the old Harmony Borax Works, and the green fields of Furnace Creek Ranch. Above the ranch, nestled on the flanks of the Funeral Mountains is Furnace Creek Inn, with its palms and terraced gardens, a swimming pool and tennis courts, and Johnny Mills to spin tales of heat and hardship to lolling visitors who idly follow Johnny's pointing finger as it traces the old and dangerous Death Valley trails; trails along which the ghosts of valley men steal smilingly, happy in their memories of harrowing adventure, amused by new definitions of hardship.