

The Amazing Billy Ball

THE AMAZING BILLY BALL

No story of Coso Hot Springs would be complete without mention of Billy Ball, who was a resident there for many years.

After working and traveling all over the world installing electrical power plants for Westinghouse and General Electric, he stayed on to educate natives how to operate them—in Japan, China, Russia, Europe, Brazil, Argentina and other countries. But Billy liked the Mojave Desert best, especially Coso Hot Springs and the adjacent Sierra Mountains for hunting.

He was born in August, 1860—went to Japan when he was 20 years old.

Returning to the United States from South America in 1905 he made and lost several small fortunes in the Nevada gold rush days. Always took his vacation at Coso Hot Springs or in the Sierra hunting, to recuperate.

SURVIVES MANY MISHAPS

He bought and operated a fishing boat off Venice and San Pedro which got destroyed in a bad storm—in which Billy was busted up—returned to Coso Hot Springs to mend.

He was in several bad accidents such as car wrecks, etc.

After several months in the hospital the doctors told him he would spend the rest of his life in a wheel chair, so he returned to Coso Hot Springs.

He drank the water—dunked in the mud—took steam baths and in three months he was walking. In six months he was riding a horse in the mountains, hunting deer.

So he built himself a house near Coso Hot Springs to live there the rest of his life.

DIPLOMAT AND SALESMAN

When the Navy wanted to take over that area in World War II as an ordnance test range, Billy persuaded the residents to sell their houses to the Navy and move out. He was a diplomat and a salesman. So at about 82 years of age the Navy gave him a job as Range Guard—patrolling the area in a Jeep, because he knew the area so well.

At about 94 years he survived a lung cancer operation—in which the doctors didn't give him much chance to pull through.

When Billy's youngest son was born in Barstow in 1938 Billy was 78 years old.

He attributed his sustained virility to the desert—plus living one day at a time—drinking good whisky and smoking good cigars.

By comparison, his eldest son died of old age at 63—because Billy said he never did learn to play or relax.

PASSES ON AT AGE 101

Last September Billy was going to the doctor's office for a check-up. The elevator wasn't running—so he walked up three flights of stairs to the doctor's office. Sat down in a chair—was kidding the nurse—and died at 101 years and one month.