NEVADA

MAGAZINE

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FALL 1975 / 1.00

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the town that wouldn't die

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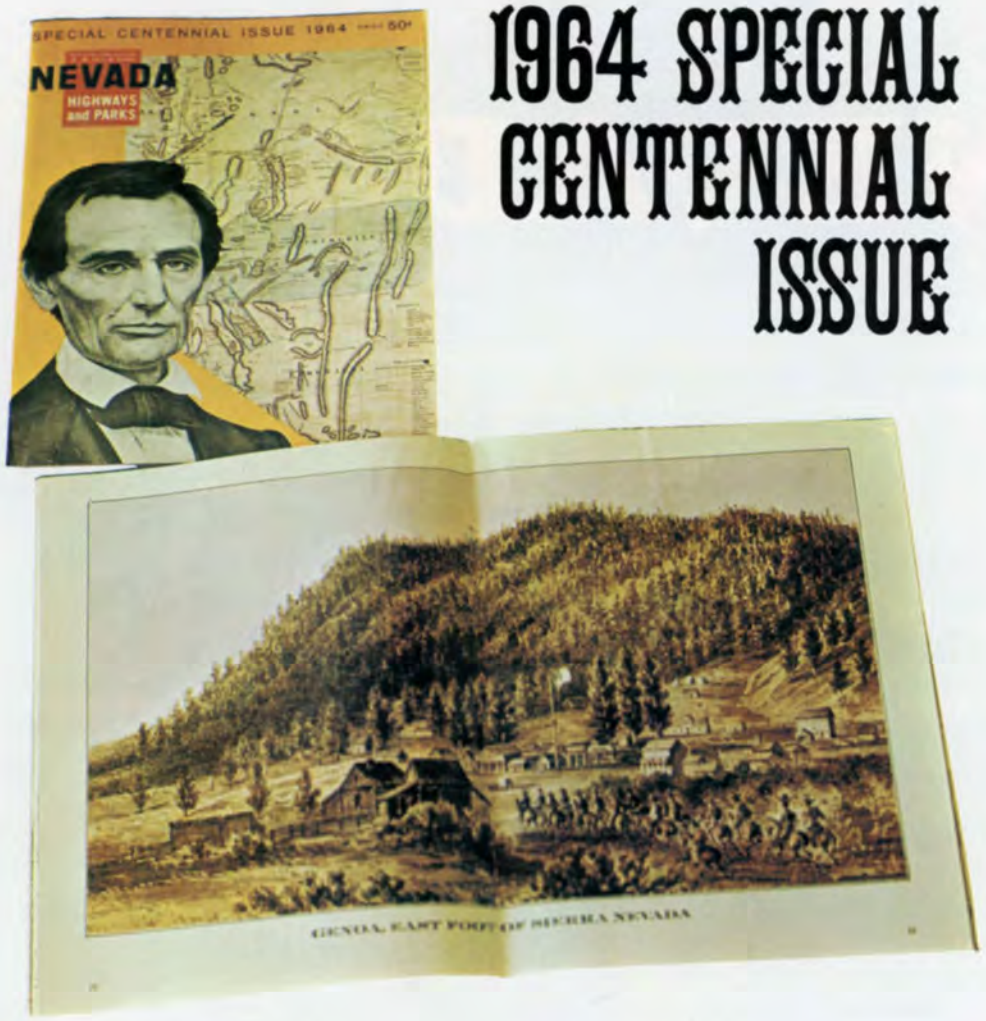

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WHERE (AND WHEN) IT'S AT IN NEVADA

JUNE

19-21	Harrah's Swap Meet & Car Show	Sparks
19-22	Reno Rodeo (Fairgrounds)	Reno
19-22	Nevada High School Rodeo	Winnemucca
21, 22	Genoa Bicentennial Fair	Genoa
21, 22	Antique Show	Virginia City
28	Miss Nevada Pageant	Reno

JULY

2-4	Damboree Days	Boulder City
4	4th of July Rodeo	Fallon
5-6	Basque Festival	Elko
17-20	All Indian Stampede	Fallon
19, 20	Ely Basque Festival	Ely
26, 27	Bonanza Days	Virginia City

AUGUST

1-3	White Pine Horse Show	Ely
16	Santa Maria Day	Dayton
16, 17, 23, 24	Pony Express Days	Ely
23, 24	Nevada Fair of Industry	Ely
25-1	Elko County Fair and Horse Races	Elko
30-1	Nevada Rodeo & Fair (Labor Day Weekend)	Winnemucca

SEPTEMBER

1	Labor Day Rodeo	Fallon
Labor Day Weekend	Hydroplane Regatta	Sparks
3-7	Nevada State Fair & Rodeo	Reno
6, 7	Western Days	Boulder City
6, 7	Camel Races	Virginia City
12-14	National Championship Air Races	Reno (Stead)
13, 14	Pro-Am Tournament	Ely
22-28	Annual Del Webb Gun Club Trapshooting Tournament	Las Vegas
26-28	Ferrari Races	Virginia City

SHOWSVILLE

LAKE TAHOE

HARRAH'S
Lawrence Welk, June 13 - July 3
Perry Como, July 4-17
Mac Davis, July 18-31
John Denver, Aug. 1-7 (dinner show)
Frank Sinatra, Aug. 1-7 (late show)
Bill Cosby, Aug. 8-21
Don Rickles, Aug. 22 - Sept. 4
Glen Campbell, Sept. 5-18
Totie Fields, Sept. 19-28

HARVEY'S
Ron Rose and David, June 1 - Oct. 31
Monte Bleu Band, May 31 - June 20
Bill Page Band, June 21 - July 11
Clyde McCoy, July 14 - Aug. 4
Orrin Tucker, Aug. 5-25
Earl "Fatha" Hines, Aug. 26 - Sept. 8

HARVEY'S
Ron Rose and David, June 1 - Oct. 31
Monte Bleu Band, May 31 - June 20
Bill Page Band, June 21 - July 11
Clyde McCoy, July 14 - Aug. 4
Orrin Tucker, Aug. 5-25
Earl "Fatha" Hines, Aug. 26 - Sept. 8

SAHARA TAHOE
Telly Savalas, June 13-19
Isaac Hayes, June 20-26
Liberace, June 27 - July 6
Tony Orlando and Dawn, July 7-13
Helen Reddy, July 14-20
Tom Jones, July 21 - Aug. 3
Debbie Reynolds, Aug. 4-10
Diana Ross, Aug. 11-25
Johnny Cash, Aug. 6 - Sept. 1
Engelbert Humperdinck, Sept. 2-15

RENO-SPARKS CARSON CITY

JOHN ASCUAGA'S NUGGET
Danny Thomas, June 11-24
Rowan & Martin, June 25 - July 9
Roger Miller, July 10-30
Red Skelton, Emmett Kelly, July 31 - Aug. 20
Juliet Prowse, Aug. 21 - Sept. 10
Andy Griffith, Frankie Avalon, Glenn Ash, Sept. 11-28

HAROLDS CLUB
Dick Roman & The Samoans, May 26 - June 22
Ponce Ponce, June 24 - July 20
Helen Forrest and Cork Proctor, July 22 - Aug. 17

An entertainment first will be a happening this season when John Denver and Frank Sinatra appear on the same bill August 1 thru 7 at Harrah's Tahoe.

HARRAH'S
Eddy Arnold, June 12-25
Tony Bennett, June 26 - July 16
Jim Stafford, July 17-30
Sammy Davis Jr., July 31 - Aug. 10
Olivia Newton-John, Aug. 11-20
Don Rickles, Aug. 21
Petula Clark, Aug. 22 - Sept. 3
The Lettermen, Sept. 4-17

ORMSBY HOUSE
Willow, May 26 - June 15
The Sound of Holly, June 9-22
Janice Weaver, June 16-22
The Goodlife, June 23 - July 11
Tasso Mavris, June 27 - July 3
Bill Page, July 12 - Aug. 31

JESSIE BECK'S RIVERSIDE
Wes James Show, June 1-21
The Homestead Act, June 8-21
Cola and Geno, The Jets, June 22 - July 12
Ree Ree and Clyde, June 22 - July 14
Ray Malus, July 15 - Aug. 11
The Tahitians, July 13 - Aug. 2
The Kenny Vernon Show, Aug. 7-30
The Homestead Act, Sept. 1-27
The Links, Sept. 3-20

LAS VEGAS

ALADDIN
Vive Paris Vive!

CAESARS PALACE
Tom Jones, May 22 - June 11; Aug. 28 - Sept. 17
Johnny Carson, June 12-18; July 31 - Aug. 6
Diana Ross, June 19 - July 2
Andy Williams, July 3-16
Paul Anka, July 17-30
Steve Lawrence & Eydie Gorme, Aug. 7-27

CIRCUS CIRCUS
Continuous Circus Acts

DESERT INN
Bobbie Gentry, June 3-30; Sept. 16 - Oct. 13
Juliet Prowse, July 1-28
Debbie Reynolds, Aug. 19 - Sept. 15

DUNES
Casino de Paris '75

FLAMINGO HILTON
Lovelace Watkins, May 29 - June 25
Connie Stevens, June 26 - July 23
Lettermen, July 24 - Aug. 20
Sandler and Young, Sept. 4-17

FREMONT
Minsky's Burlesque

FRONTIER
Wayne Newton, Apr. 24 - June 25
Robert Goulet, Carol Lawrence, June 26 - Aug. 6
Bob Newhart, Aug. 7 - Sept. 3
Phil Harris, Sept. 4-24

HACIENDA
Spice on Ice

HOLIDAY CASINO
The Wild World of Burlesque

LANDMARK
Country Music, USA

LAS VEGAS HILTON
Liberace, June 3-23
Glen Campbell, June 24 - July 14
The Johnny Cash Show, July 15-24
Perry Como, July 25 - Aug. 7
Charlie Rich, Aug. 8-17
Elvis Presley, Aug. 18 - Sept. 1
Bill Cosby, Sept. 2-22

MGM GRAND
Dean Martin, June 11-17; Aug. 6-12; Sept. 10-16
Helen Reddy, June 18 - July 8
Jackson Five, July 9-22
Shecky Greene, July 23 - Aug. 5

RIVIERA
Carpenters, Jose Feliciano, May 29 - June 11
Tony Orlando & Dawn, Rodney Dangerfield, June 12-25
Dionne Warwicke, Sonny Bono, June 26 - July 9
Don Rickles, Peter Gordeno, July 10-23
Engelbert Humperdinck, Dick Capri, July 24 - Aug. 6
Petula Clark, Aug. 7-20
Carpenters, Aug. 21 - Sept. 3
Liza Minnelli, Sept. 4-17
Burt Bacharach, Olivia Newton-John, Sept. 18 - Oct. 1

SAHARA
Totie Fields, Bert Convy, June 12-25
Telly Savalas, June 26 - July 9
Buddy Hackett, July 10-23
Joey Bishop, Charo, July 24 - Aug. 6

SANDS
Buck Owens, Mal Z. Lawrence, May 21 - June 10
Rich Little, Mel Torme, June 11 - July 8
Wayne Newton, Dave Barry, July 9 - Sept. 30

STARDUST
Le Lido de Paris

THUNDERBIRD
Bobby Goldsboro, Golddiggers, June 5-25
King Family, July 10 - Aug. 6

TROPICANA
Folies Bergere

UNION PLAZA
Broadway Entertainment

Tonopah
the town that wouldn't die

Text and Photographs by Grady Johnson

"Tonopah grows on yuh, don't it?"

The leathery oldtimer on a loafer bench along the two-block main street highway through town didn't wait for an answer. "Nobody here cares what a man used to be," he rambled, "only what he is now."

He looked me up and down, then, watery blue eyes twinkling, "What brings you here?"

I told him I was photographing and writing about the town.

"Careful it don't break your camera," he cackled.

"What do you do?" I paid him back.

"Since the mines closed 30 years ago I just sit," he said.

He was right on all scores. Tonopah does infect you. It isn't pretty, but has many little patches of beauty. And there's a lot of sitting — on the benches, in the bars and at the gambling tables. But there's a lot of action, too.

The once-booming silver camp in high, dry central Nevada — now showing signs of re-birth from high silver prices — takes some getting used to.

If you don't mind wind, dust, and even snow in June, aren't unnerved by rattlesnakes and can live with the underground rumblings from the Atomic Energy Commission's testings 40 miles away, you become enamored of the fun-loving, community of 1,500 people which never quite became a ghost town.

Although tourists come and go at all hours, the 10 o'clock children's curfew siren on the semi-volunteer fire house finds most of the townspeople asleep except for casino dealers on the night shift. When the wind stops and the dogs are sleeping, the unwonted desert silence causes any man-made sound to seem an irreverance.

Tonopah means "thorny bush hiding spring" in Shoshone. So little water comes out of hiding that there is little grass, few trees and so much dust blowing off the fragile desert crust and mountains of once-worthless mine tailings (now fenced and guarded in re-appraisal) that tidy housewives are driven to tears. They joke that the best way to clean house is to open front and back doors to the frequent 20 to 30 mile an hour winds, weight down things you want to keep and let it blow out.

But there's a delightful absence of humidity, a never-failing morning sun to instantly erase last night's summer chill, no mosquitoes unless you puddle your often-frozen garden with costly city water, few flies and — your pets will want to

know — no fleas! This latter phenomenon makes for contented packs of tourist-abandoned dogs which couldn't have been betrayed in a better place. They doze unscratching in the shade of the famous Mizpah Hotel in the morning and cross the street with the sun to continue their siestas in the shadows of the Tonopah Club and the Tonopah Belle, saving themselves to bark all night at cats, rabbits and one another in sleep-shattering bedlam which has brought the hitherto unheard-of-dog-catcher to the freedom-conscious town.

Tonopah, like all Nevada, is used to criticism. Mark Twain chided that the devil, set loose in Nevada, would take one long look and go back to hell, homesick. "It never rains here," he exaggerated, "and the dew never falls. No flowers grow and no green thing gladdens the eye. The birds that fly over the land carry their provisions with them." While the California and Arizona deserts abound with spectacular cacti, Nevada has few oases to break the monotony of parched earth. There are, however, many beautiful farms in hidden valleys off the main highways.

But Tonopah's extreme dryness attracts people with arthritis and respiratory problems while the safe, well-policed streets are a joy for playing children and unescorted women. I can never forget the surprise and pleasure in the face of my 11-year-old Robert when I asked him one day to go downtown on an errand alone. Where he had lived formerly he could not even go to the neighborhood market alone because of almost daily muggings.

While fleas and mosquitoes dry up on the wing, human allergies and skin ailments likewise perish for lack of pollen and moisture. Affable publisher Ira M. Jacobson of the Tonopah Times-Bonanza and Goldfield News came here from the dampness of Oregon 25 years ago "to get warm" and dry out his psoriasis. When he told me this I felt the sides of my head and discovered that my own little inflamed

Hot summer sun sets behind the supposed haunted Castle, a local landmark. After dark, Tonopah beckons travelers to stop, eat, drink and gamble. Fiddler on the sidewalk is Amos Carpenter, owner of the Northern Cafe, a descendant of Tex Rickard's original Northern Saloon of Goldfield.

patches of "heartache" had vanished in six weeks. Even athlete's foot is so little a problem that the municipal pool provides no foot bath to kill it.

Tom Davies, a chef, came here from Cleveland five years ago for his arthritis. Walking with the aid of braces, he says he prefers to live near the sea to fish but the dampness puts him in a wheel chair in two weeks.

Our pollen-fleeing North Dakota neighbor, Connie Jamison, whose husband, Robert, was a bring-em-back-alive lion hunter in the area when these abounded, vows she can't breathe anywhere else. He, born there, stays because he likes the "unhypocritical atmosphere." "People like Tonopah for the same fun reasons they like San Francisco," he says.

Newcomers like my low-land family, however, often gasp for breath even in repose because of the rare 6,033 foot altitude. But this is small price to pay for wide-open nasal and bronchial passages which freely drain, making nose drops and breathilizers, like flea collars, unnecessary. But the zero humidity also shrinks our shoes and hat bands, cracks our lips and dehydrates our throats so we can't swallow if we happen to sleep with our mouths open. Furniture accustomed to damper climes splits. The family wash dries so fast that by the time two 30-foot lines are hung we can start taking down the first things.

Except for some juvenile vandalism, parental neglect, and minor drug problems, Tonopah is virtually free of crime, claims Nye county District Attorney William Beko who has lived all his 52 years in that biggest county in the state despite his other prestigious jobs as chairman of the state crime commission and president of the state bar association which might have lured him to livelier places like Carson City or Reno. "Tonopah people are willing to get involved," he said. "They'll report crime and appear as witnesses. Most of our crime is committed by 'bad' newcomers at-

tracted by gambling."

Although the town sponsors many activities to keep its children occupied, too many visitors leave kids out on the sidewalk bored while they gamble and drink. Lloyd Yandle, a former Los Angeles policeman who "retired" here to become county probation officer, told me he investigated 27 child neglect cases in one recent month. Sheriff Don Tomany keeps two patrol cars continuously moving through tiny Tonopah and their presence, plus several highway patrol cars, make the place look like a police dragnet is in operation around the clock.

It's not a place a well person would *choose* for a permanent home. As a result it does not grow. Its 2,000-odd population holds its own without much mining activity because of tourism, highway department headquarters, an off-and-on air force base currently off, and activities connected to atomic testing and mining for lesser minerals and gem stones such as turquoise, the latter now big business. Despite cheap rentals when they can be found and bargains in houses for sale, newcomers — who nevertheless far outnumber long-time residents — seldom stay because jobs are scarce and salaries low, making it mainly a town of transients. The cool breeze which blows in the summer unfortunately also blows when the mercury drops below zero. Residents often drive 100 miles to Bishop, California, to stock up on cheaper food and to see a movie.

Mrs. Ralph Piller says she stays and likes it "because I was born here and don't know any better." Mr. Piller is tempted "to pack up and leave," he says on windy days.

Billionaire Howard Hughes came here in 1957 to quietly marry actress Jean Peters in the Nye County courthouse and, although they say he never came back, his presence is still felt. His Summa Corporation has bought up most of the important mining claims in the area and maintains an office and a half dozen mining engineers and maintenance men. By coincidence one of the actresses he discovered came here to go into business. Mrs.

Tonopah celebrates its survival each year with "Jim Butler Days." Mucking and drilling contests recall mining boom days. Governor Mike O'Callaghan rides to the festivities (below) which include a noisy shoot-out in the street, representing the kind of action that made Tonopah a genuine Wild West town.

Lloyd Yandle says Hughes saw her photograph as Miss Oregon on the cover of Look magazine, gave her a contract on condition that she *not* go on to the Miss America finals and built her into a "minor star."

Mr. and Mrs. Yandle have purchased the brick house in Goldfield, 26 miles away, which Tex Rickard owned in 1906 when he promoted the lightweight championship fight there won by Joe Gans on a foul from Battling Nelson. The Yandles plan to turn the house into a museum to display some of the mementos they have bought or dug from dumps and from the tanks of old outhouses in the area.

Even Jim Butler who founded Tonopah when he discovered silver 73 years ago left it two years after amassing a fortune to retire to the greener scenery of Lone Pine, California. Butler, a rancher from nearby Belmont, struck it rich when his burro strayed during a storm and took refuge under a ledge of almost pure silver.

Hughes' people have given Butler's famous Biblical-named Mizpah mine a glossy aluminum paint job. Such neatness in an industry not noted for it gives hope to unemployed miners that Tonopah will boom again. Several other companies are drilling, assaying and issuing reports as shiny as the metals they predict. A Canadian consortium at the neighboring Manhattan camp reports vast quantities of placer earth which may be profitably mined for gold and silver.

"Manhattan (population 30) was a beehive last week," reported Fern Vetsera in the Times Bonanza recently. "County surveyors were out to hunt for roads and our county crew is fixing up the old ones. With the big trucks bringing in mining equipment — and others stealing it — and sightseeing tourists all over we honestly could use a traffic cop."

Some oldtimers like my 84-year-old miner neighbor, Walter Ball, maintain a wait-and-see attitude. "Some companies think they can get the gold out without building a mill by leaching ore with cyanide but the process never was very suc-

A fleet of water wagons was required to supply the town in days past. One promoter went so far as to declare he'd have a lawn if he had to water it with champagne.

The famous old Mizpah Hotel (right) is still a central landmark and popular gathering place.

cessful. While the price of metals is up, you can't hire miners for $4 a day any more either." Ball came here 60 years ago from the Colorado mines and has seen optimistic promoters come and go and he'll believe the boom when the town resounds to the drills of 2,500 miners as it did in its heyday. All around town and far out into the desert are well-preserved reminders of the most recent disappointment in 1927. That year hundreds of early-day automobiles were abandoned during a "silver rush" which was based on little but talk. The three Tonopah Metscher brothers, Phil, Bill and Allen, have assembled four Model-T Fords exclusively from parts which they salvaged here and there from the castaways, and which are worth more than many mining claims. If you come here and *must* look for real gold, however, Ball advises: "Look in smooth old mountain formations, where the earth shows some red color and only on the west side. At least, that's where it always has been found everywhere in the past."

Silver prefers beige or tan surroundings, he observed. Tonopah produced almost $150,000,000 worth of silver from its beige mountain while, Goldfield, the next town to the south, gouged $85,000,000 in gold from reddish-hued Columbia mountain.

Although food and utilities are expensive, our plain but adequate 3-bedroom part-adobe tin-roofed house with hardwood floors rented for only $70 a month — plus $100 a month to heat it during winter. Across the street, Mr. and Mrs. David Calhoun of Gardena, California, recently bought a one-bedroom house furnished with some antiques on a good-sized fenced lot for only $2,500. They and the Winfields from Arkansas vow that when the wind is from the southwest the dust is generously mixed with smog from Los Angeles, 500 miles away. "It has to blow somewhere and we are getting it," says pretty Caroline Makris, daughter of Menless C. Winfield. She and her husband, Ted, from Salida, Colorado, work in papa's Lone Mountain turquoise mine, the world's biggest, 18 miles northwest of Tonopah during summer vacation from Adams State

Donwtown Tonopah was a bustling place when the mines were paying off (above).

Beverly Loyd, Miss Oregon of 1940, was discovered by Howard Hughes and starred in six Hollywood films. Today she operates an antique shop with husband, Lloyd Yandle, a former Los Angeles policeman. Jack Dempsey washed dishes as a boy in Goldfield's Santa Fe Saloon, down the dusty road from Tonopah. His portrait hangs in the antique shop where Ruth Dilworth works. She is a world traveler but decided to settle down in rural Nevada.

University at Alamosa, Colorado.

Al Van Houten and his wife and three daughters stay because they have a good stable business as the only undertakers in the area. While Mr. Van Houten does the burying, even to digging the graves himself because he can't get anyone to do it, Mrs. Van Houten runs the only flower shop in town and acts as his secretary both for the funeral business and chamber affairs. They came here from Ventura, California, "to escape big town pollution, traffic and crime," he said. The children were shocked by the lack of trees, grass and paint on the houses. Recently, driving through Las Vegas with their parents, they became excited at seeing these touches of civilization again. "I told them Tonopah, for all its weathered brown buildings and rocky hillsides, looks better underneath than any big city," said Van Houten, a devout Catholic who believes "death is the beginning, not the end" and sees nothing to joke about in his burying the dead while trying to breathe life into the place. "It's what's inside people that makes a town and Tonopah has a good heart."

While talking friendly and forthright, Tonopahns are slow to really accept newcomers. "Too many are bums," a restaurant owner told me. "They go broke at tables in Reno or Las Vegas and run out of gas here. Even if they find a job they don't stay long."

A big reason is the lack of social life, thinks Mrs. Ida Traynor, a part-owner of the Tonopah Club. "People here don't get together much," she says. "They are outdoor folk and loners who prefer to camp, fish and hunt." District Attorney Beko believes a contributing factor is the lack of good, modern housing rentals. Mrs. Margo Neighbors who administers the food stamp program for the many qualifying Tonopah pensioners, says there is plenty to keep a woman occupied here if she looks for it—working with boy and girl scouts, little leaguers, community projects, swimming, tennis and golf. She and husband, Roy, the county commissioner, fled big town problems for the quiet of Tonopah but hated it the first six months. "Then I learned to love it," she says, including an occasional $10 investment at the tables. Neighbors was instrumental in getting the Atomic Energy Commission's vast installations put on the Nye County tax rolls for a $5,000,000 windfall in back taxes.

A tourist stopping in town to play the slot machines finds that so many shops open and close when they feel like it, that it often looks like a quiet ghost town with "closed" signs on doors up and down Main Street.

The first time I came to Tonopah in 1946 was to research a story about the old stage between Tonopah and Goldfield, once the biggest town in Nevada with 20,000 people. The railroad between the two towns was being torn up and sold for scrap — a factor which has helped retard mining ever since. Houses were being moved out of both places on flat-bed trucks — the mining camps' forerunner of today's mobile homes. Both places had all the earmarks of genuine ghost towns — with vacant schools and well-equipped fire houses, deserted homes fully furnished with curtains blowing in open windows and doors ajar but with few people in sight. Today most of the houses are gone except for a few shuttered shacks owned by out-of-towners and nearly every available house is occupied, including several modern mobile homes in Goldfield and about 40 in Tonopah.

I returned to Goldfield in 1953 for several months knowing it to be a quiet place to write. I got material from old residents, including Death Valley Scotty who was passing his last days at his fabulous castle there. The one thing he wanted to know was "what's whiskey worth?" and from my report quickly calculated that a bartender could still make a fortune "if he shorts shots."

"Town's deader'n a door nail," he rued. "Understand even the red-light district's closed." Houses in Goldfield were still being moved out and lots that once sold for $40,000 were going for $5 and $10 or for taxes. Mining claims which many think may become valuable one day were selling for anything one cared to offer.

Then and now the towns were more valuable for their antiques

Ted Gillentine has worked all over the country. Now he crafts leather creations in Tonopah.

Terrance M. Sotak, the "perfesser," is a former engineering instructor from Purdue University. He visited Tonopah a year ago and stayed to deal "21" at the Mizpah. Robert Jameson, once a lion hunter, keeps in practice by shooting rattlesnakes around home. Rattlers are a threat to animals and careless people and are far from being an endangered species. The best way to shoot a rattler, according to Jameson, is point blank. If the snake strikes, it will go for the gun barrel instead of the man.

and Indian artifacts than their ores. Between two big boulders above Goldfield I found, literally, an Indian arrowhead factory. The ground was covered with imperfect flints which I could imagine having been rejected by the foreman-brave in charge of busily chipping squaws. The arrows, curiously, were hewn from a white flint that isn't found in the area. Twenty-one years later I returned to the spot and found a dozen arrowheads still there. Tonopah had similar unchanging characteristics as shown by mine cars tumbling down some tailings exactly as I had photographed them two decades before.

Last summer I returned to Tonopah to give my three children, Julie 12, Robert 11, and Benjamin 8, an experience which would make for an educational holiday. We also hoped it would dry up Ben's chronic bronchial phlegm which it did, miraculously, after four months.

They caught horned toads on the desert, learned to cure a snake skin, fired their own rocket which they had not been permitted for a year to launch anywhere else they had lived, learned to handle a rifle and to find and identify mineral and gem specimens which they polished in their own tumbler, and caught trout with their bare hands. They toured the old mining camps with their mother, Didi, and me, and got their history and mine lore from elderly miner-neighbors and by digging in old garbage dumps for bottles, tokens, coins and other

The sorting room of the Lone Mountain tourquoise mine (left). Nobody is getting rich but they're making a living. Rocky Wilson (above) polishes a gem found by the sorters.

There are odd treasures in the ground around Tonopah and youngsters dig for the loot displayed above. Old bottles and such are popular curios for sale to tourists and serious collectors alike.

relics of the past.

Benjamin, who formerly wanted to be a farmer, decided after visiting and watching operations at the turquoise mine, that he wants to become a prospector and find the surface outcroppings of existing mines so that he can "apex" them under the law which gives such a discoverer the entire vein. They thrilled to tales of rattlesnake hunts and lion and jaguar captures by former trapper Bob Jamison and learned that the poisonous scorpions around Goldfield often glow like the mineral scheelite, which produces tungsten, when exposed to fluorescent light and that prospectors who search at night for it have to be careful the ore they pick up does not sting them.

And they had an exciting reunion with some old rock-friends from England. Julie noted that some round grey flint stones in the yard of our house were exactly like those on which she used to sunbathe on the "shingle" beach at Selsey, (Sussex), England, and which fishermen used to split and build their flint cottages out of, shiny side out. She inquired and was told by Mr. Ball that they did, indeed, come from Europe, possibly from the Sussex beaches she knew. They had been brought around the Horn as ballast by old sailing vessels coming empty to San Francisco for hides and tallow and brought on to the mining camps to be used as crushing rocks in tumbler mills, their extreme hardness making them as good as metal balls. "When the rocks were worn down to the size of golf balls they were replaced by larger fist-sized ones," Mr. Ball explained.

Tonopah's unique sand golf course might seem like a joke but it's quite a challenge. Besides, the town has better uses for precious water than in maintaining a giant lawn.

There might be another big ore strike under this parched earth, but for now it's left to the lizards and wild horses, the only ones who can make their living out of the desert.

The children watched cowboys at work, listened to a drunken Indian on a Tonopah street tell them a tale about his horse being stolen and heard from a cowboy that no saddle horse is fast enough to catch the wild horses which graze only a few miles out of town, and which came in to inspect the new Tonopah Golf and Country Club (lots of country and little golf).

Camping at Peavine, in Toiyabe National Forest, they snuggled close to me and Didi, sure that the cat creature which had left its claw marks on one of the fish they had caught would return and feeling a measure of security from the billions of stars which lit our camp and whose brilliant presence they, and we, never suspected.

We left Tonopah soon afterward because it has no college for the children. But we will never forget it — even without the treasure of old bottles, rocks and mining souvenirs and the menagerie of horned toads that left with us. How we wish we could have taken some of its wonderful earthy people! □

BONNIE SPRINGS OLD NEVADA

By ALAN JARLSON

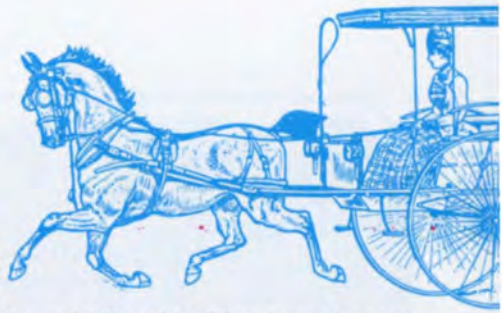
You step aboard the steam train, a working mini-replica of the fabled high iron that girded the continent to irrevocably bind the civilized cities of the East with the untamed boom towns of the West.

The click-clack-click-clack of steel wheels traversing narrow gauge rails acts hypnotically; your peripheral vision catches blurred glimpses of native flora — Joshua, yucca, mesquite and sage checkerboarding the desert sands; your thoughts, as the eye of your mind recedes into a distant past, are only faintly interrupted by the shrill blast of the steam engine's whistle and the distant echo of six-guns exploding in anger.

The train squeals to a stop. You step off. The gates beckon and you open them and step through. Mesmerized willingly by the fantasy of escapism that occasionally grips all of us, you have crossed a threshhold of time, leaving behind modern day America and its real fears of pollution, economic stress and nuclear holocaust; before you lies a world once real but now recreated with such remarkable authenticity that you feel transported on a time machine — back, back, back, ever backwards through the calendar, back to the West that was, young and brawling, wild and genuinely woolly, back to a day when hopes and visions were as high as the mountains, both conquerable only by men — and women — larger than life.

The boarded sidewalks snap under your heels, the sounds, the sights and smells are at once foreign but somehow familiar. The Old West lives again and, by golly, you're standing smack-hold-

LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU



A LONG AWAITED FAMILY ATTRACTION FOR LAS VEGAS

LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

After years of planning, the golden spike is driven by Robin Levinson. The miniature train is a replica of the kind that opened the West.

Main Street of Old Nevada bears great resemblance to any one of Nevada's long gone boom towns.

your-hat-dab in the middle of it. You have become, via the magic carpet of one southern Nevada couple's dream, a temporary citizen of a ghost town come alive, of a mining camp that again trembled with excitement to the shouts of "eureka! . . . eldorado! . . . gold! . . . silver! . . . bonanza!"

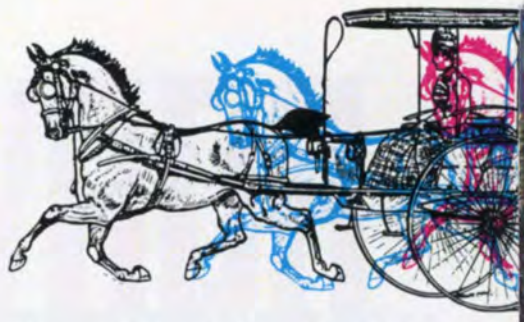
The time is the mid-1800's and you're in *Old Nevada,* U.S.A.!

An easy 30-minute drive from Las Vegas, this creation of Al and Bonnie Levinson — an expatriated New Yorker and a strip hotel skating star — is Nevada's newest tourist and family recreation attraction.

It is also the culmination of years of dreaming and planning and hard work by the Levinsons. Laid out on five acres of what was once a thriving cattle ranch, *Old Nevada* is a town with stores, restaurants, saloons and museums, a blacksmith shop and opera house — all painstakingly carboned after the architecture of the mining communities that erupted from the Silver State's landscape during the boom days of the 19th century. The town also boasts its own antique, but working, telephone and telegraph system and, late last year, was granted stamp cancellation status by the U.S. Postal Service.

Old Nevada is dissected by a main street down which stride prospectors with burros, laden with picks and pans and grub, in tow; mean-looking hombres armed with six-shooters hanging low from their hips, followed by even meaner looking shotgun-toting men of the "law" — all actors and stunt men who provide continuous "Old West" entertainment and excitement for visitors that, to date, have numbered about 75,000 since the Levinsons christened their town on May 1, 1974.

Lending to the man-made realism the Levinsons have designed is the natural grandeur which provides a stimulating backdrop for *Old Nevada.* Due west of Las Vegas, the town is tucked in against the vermillion escarpment of Red Rock Canyon, by itself a scenic wonderland of southern Nevada and rivaled only by the more familiar Valley of Fire. *Old Nevada* sits well inside the 115-acre Bonnie Springs Ranch (renamed for Mrs. Levin-



A rough character gets "what for" from a petite employee (all in good fun, folks).

LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

Al Levinson, Old Nevada owner, and Bill Kellogg of Western Airlines prepare to join a group inspecting the new attraction (above).

Popular singer, Jerry Vale, blasts away with matched 45's on opening day.

JERRY NORTH

son when her mother assumed ownership in 1952) at the southerly end of the canyon. The Levinson spread sits hard by the storied Spring Mountain Ranch, whose owners in succession have included Chet Lauck, the "Lum" of "Lum and Abner" radio fame; Vera Krupp, once the wife of German munitions maker Alfried Krupp von Bohlen, and Howard Hughes, who hardly needs any further identifying comment.

Wallowing, as it were, in Nevada's history it was not surprising that Al Levinson should one day suggest to his wife, Bonnie, "there's simply too much of the past here to be lost — let's try to recreate it." The idea was fine, but the task of making it a reality was herculean — the Levinsons would have to be builders who could match the mountains of the Red Rocks which had been unmoved by the ravages of time but, if the builders had their way, would become a natural setting for a dream-come-true.

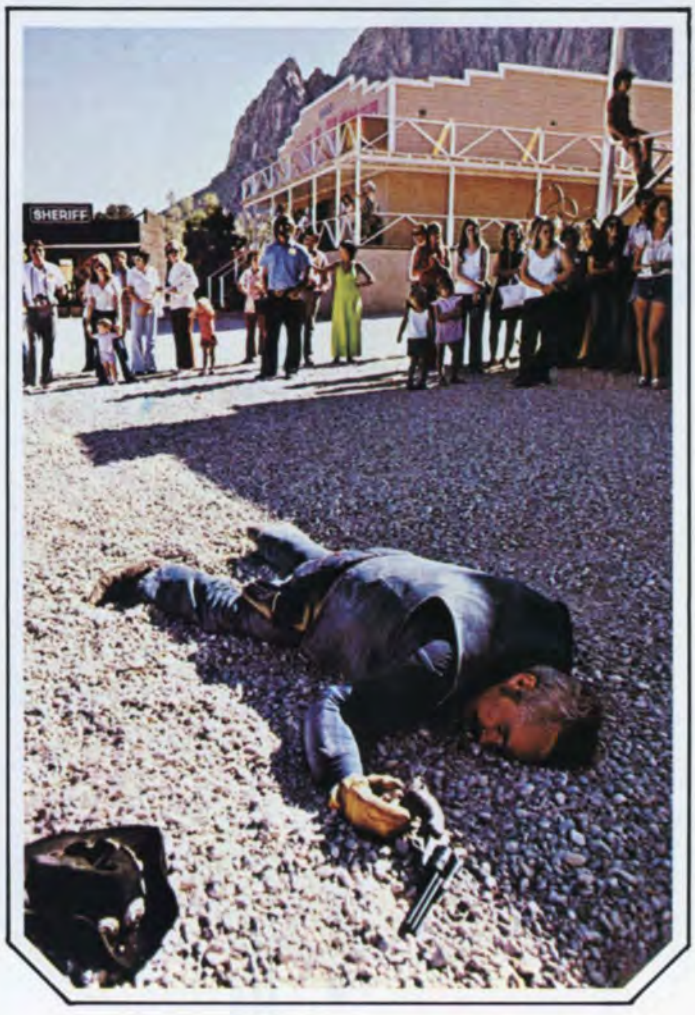
The dream began not long after Gladys McGaugh acquired the ranch she would name "Bonnie Springs" in honor of her only daughter. That was in 1952, and the ranch had already given way to modern times. Where stake corrals once penning beef cattle stood, there now were stables housing horses any dude could ride for one-buck-an-hour. There was a saloon on the place, called the "Red Rock Tavern." Bonnie McGaugh was the star of George Arnold's "Holiday On Ice" at the old Last Frontier Hotel. Al Levinson was a recent arrival from the streets of New York. The two met, they courted, and in 1953 they married. A natural entrepreneur, and energetic beyond physical understanding, Levinson undertook to put the stamp of the Bonnie Springs Ranch on the Nevada tourist map. And he dreamed. Dreamed of things that once were, a past he only knew from western films flashed on the screens of New York motion picture houses, but a past he felt he could rebuild.

But dreams-come-true don't come easy. His first goal was to build Bonnie Springs as a family-type attraction. Levinson set out to accomplish this feat by expanding the weathered Red Rock Tavern into one of southern Nevada's finest eating places where

a good, home-cooked meal didn't cost the diner an arm-and-a-leg, or more. Through the transformation, it became known simply as the "Bonnie Springs Ranch Restaurant." Picnic tables were added to the grounds, a pond was developed to attract wayward ducks who soon made it their permanent home, and animals that kids could pet, such as goats and burros, roamed the place at will. A business was born that could support the dream of Al Levinson, the dream of building his own western town.

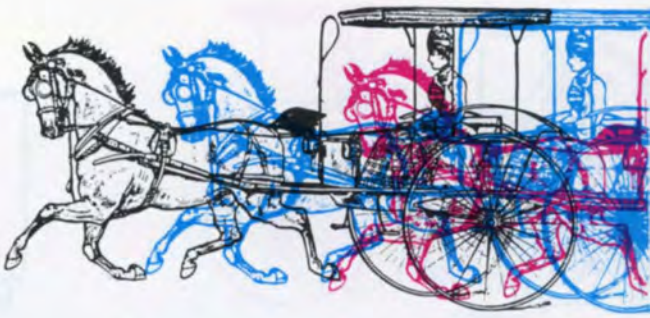
In 1970, Levinson had his architectural plans drawn for *Old Nevada*. By 1972 he had laid the foundation. In between those two years he had done his research with meticulous precision. A collection of apothecary bottles, circa 1880, offered for sale in New Mexico spurred him to the bidding. They would be fine for the building he had assigned as a replica of an old infirmary, which would also serve as a first aid station for the town. Word of a miner's pick used on the Comstock for sale reached him about the same time he heard he could buy a brace of lanterns which once lighted the tunnels of the Goldfield Camp. He bought them both. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Department of History had some pictures. Would he like to look at them? He would, and did, and then jumped in a car for a trip to Ely to talk to an elderly lady whose grandfather had been one of the first to stake a claim at Delamar. On the way back to Las Vegas, he spent a day at Pioche, prodding and probing for artifacts of that boom camp's turbulent past. But items such as these were only to provide the guts for *Old Nevada*. Now committed, Levinson had to find the materials to fit accurately into what would become buildings newly-made, but fashioned by long abandoned constructural concepts, to house those treasured guts.

From Oregon he imported planks of wormwood out of which the Miners Restaurant would be built. From the west side of the Spring Mountain Range overlooking Pahrump Valley, after he got a federal permit, he hauled down from the highest reaches of that Alpine crest a gigantic native Ponderosa pine, had it cut into slabs measuring 65 feet and



JERRY NORTH

Street fights are staged by stuntmen to the delight of all. And the inevitable ending, another bad guy bites the dust.



JERRY NORTH

slapped them down into pre-cut niches of two of his buildings and proclaimed, "now, that's a real saloon's bar!" Not satisfied with the rough-hewn decor, Levinson ordered whiskey bottles—stamped, of course, with an *Old Nevada* label on each—set on the Ponderosa bar tops, accompanied by the admonition, "let the customer pour his own!"

A one-room schoolhouse, complete with desks into which ink wells had been cut, appeared next. Levinson isn't talking about where he got the desks. But rumor has it he traveled more than 1,000 miles to buy them from the estate of a California lady who had taught school in the last days of Rhyolite and, since the town was broke, got paid off in what she could salvage from the school.

And so *Old Nevada* grew.

There's the blacksmith shop. It is equipped with perhaps the only commercially-operated hand forge in Nevada. Smithy Earl Taylor, the last of a forgotten breed, will fire a piece of iron, curve it on an anvil and pound it into proper shape and fit it to your pony's hoof on request. And it costs no more than a shoeing job done by a cold steel-and-tap man.

There's the *Old Nevada* wax museum. Sculpted figures from the state's history — Walker and Carson, Brigham Young and Chief Winnemucca, Padre Francis Garcia and Jedediah Smith—haunt the visitor. The tour of the museum ends with a unique illusion — a waxen Abraham Lincoln addressing the viewer audibly with his pronouncements declaring Nevada the 36th state.

The Opera House is also a must. The players, led by Russ and Claire Keefner, give the ticket holder, seated on wood benches, every opportunity to hiss the villain. And if you forget the obvious reaction, a lettered card is propelled from stage right as a cue. Just like the days of old.

The towns of the Old West always had a hanging tree. Judge Roy Bean used to boast that beer and law received equal billing at his Langtry,

In another open air melodrama, a cowboy was too slow on the trigger and gets measured for a box. Shortly after, frontier justice puts a swift end to the varmint that did the shooting.

Bonnie and Al Levinson take time out to survey around Old Nevada in the rugged Red Rock area near Las Vegas.

Texas, saloon which also served as his courthouse. He was the law west of the Pecos, but he avered that he always gave a man a fair trial before he ordered him hanged.

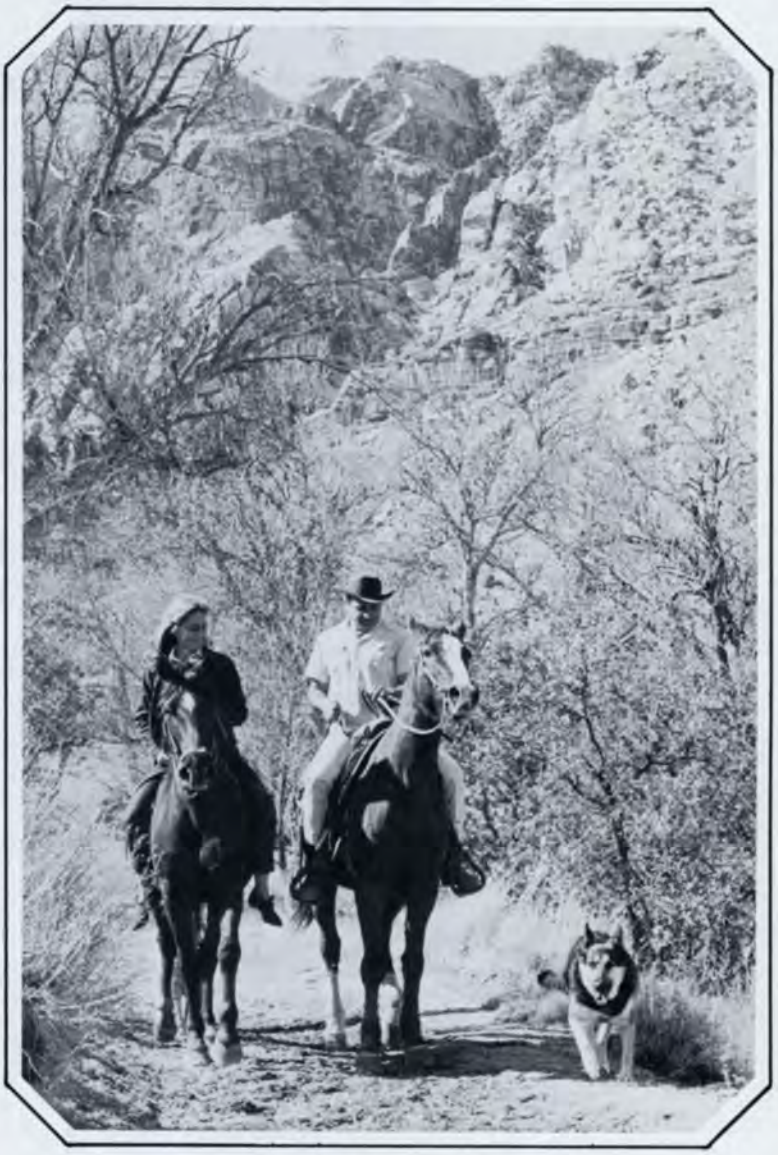
Perhaps a grisly touch, Levinson nonetheless has added a hanging tree to the town. It rises in the plaza, betwixt the sheriff's office, the Opera House and the big saloon. The baddies caught by the town's intrepid sheriff — if not gunned down earlier — wind up victims of this oaken gallows. Again stunt men use stunt equipment, but still it's realistic enough to bring, as the hangings invariably do, fearful screams from ladies and children and grimaces from the men in attendance.

The stunt man hangs there, swaying, his legs kicking. It's all too real. Your subconscious tells you that somewhere you once read about people "twisting slowly in the wind." Your conscious mind tells you that's a modern-day term that doesn't apply to the 19th century. You shake your head. You say, they hanged men in those days, back in the 1800's, for seemingly minor things, like the theft of a horse, just like that fellow whose neck appeared to be snapped by the yank of the rope back there in the plaza of *Old Nevada*.

Now heading out, you step aboard the same steam train. You hear the familiar click-clack-click-clack. The menacing face of the Red Rock escarpment no longer menaces you — instead it slips into a distant background as the train takes you further and further from the experience of a brief touch with the past. You step from the train and, because that day it happened to be raining, you recognize the footprint you left when you started off on this strange odyssey into the past.

You hear the steam whistle sing its lively song and you hear the echo of a .44 and now, as you point your station wagon back to the glittering real life of Las Vegas, you know what you want to tell somebody.

"Heck, I've been to *Old Nevada*, U.S.A.!" □



Old Nevada is convenient for Las Vegas visitors, just a short drive from the "Strip."

CANDELARIA

HOME OF THE NORTHERN BELLE

Photos by Keith Mellander

Some of the photos show Candelaria as it looks today. If you look closely and use your imagination you may be able to see beyond the remnants into the town's booming days in the mid-1870's when her Northern Belle mine made her famous and prosperous. Discovered by roving Spanish

continued

PHOTOS COURTESY NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

prospectors, Candelaria later boasted a post office, two hotels, eleven saloons, restaurants, livery stables and other thriving businesses. The town declined after 1885, then had a short-lived revival before another decline about 1892. Candelaria is six and a half miles west of U.S. 95 about 16 miles southeast of Mina.

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

The view from 12,100 feet, looking back across Nevada toward Walker Lake.

Climbing Boundary Peak, Nevada's highest

By John Elk III

The sun was already well into afternoon when I turned west off Highway 3A south of Hawthorne and headed toward Inyo National Forest. The road is a gravel track that wanders and dips seemingly without purpose over the high desert countryside. It climbs gently at first as it turns north then west again past old mines and occasional unmarked turnoffs. Finally it swings in a long arc, makes for a line of trees along a small stream, and enters Trail Canyon.

Here the road begins to climb more steeply while becoming even more rough and narrow. At least twice it was almost impassable for my small car. After passing the signs for the National Forest it crosses and recrosses the little stream then begins to smooth out. But it never ceases to climb.

Around 8,000 feet the road becomes hard-packed earth and nearly levels out. It alternately passes small grassy areas next to the stream and thickets of water birch encroaching on the desert. At 8,100 feet I pulled around into one of the larger of these grassy meadows and shut off the engine. As I stepped out of the car I could just see the object of my trip peeking over the crest of a nearby hill: the summit of Boundary Peak.

Boundary Peak is the northernmost summit in the White Mountains and the only one that lies within Nevada. At 13,140 feet it is the highest peak in the state, being less than 100 feet higher than Wheeler Peak near Ely. Aptly named, it lies only one-quarter mile from the Nevada border. Slightly over a mile away is Montgomery Peak, nearly 300 feet higher; but it is in California. The saddle between them, nearly 13,000 feet high is, I believe, the highest state boundary line in the United States.

I had tried to climb Boundary Peak once before without success. A series of planning mistakes had left us (I had gone with a friend that time) still 2,400 feet from the summit when we had had to turn back. I hoped this time to correct those mistakes.

Our first mistake had been to start too far from the base of the mountain and I had already driven past the point of our previous camp. This time I planned to camp at the very head of Trail Canyon, another three miles away. I checked my gear, put on my boots, and locked the car. With a slight wince I shouldered my pack (never as light as I hope) and started walking up the road. Within a half mile I reached its end. There were no cars in the little turn-around there and I had seen none while driving in. Apparently I would be completely alone in the canyon.

From the parking area a series of trails lead up to the canyon head. They are mainly cattle tracks but I saw very few of the animals themselves. There is one trail, no doubt helped along by man, which is slightly more prominent than the others. It weaves back and forth across the stream, through the hummocked grass and thick clumps of birch alongside the water, and up onto the sage covered hills. It also has a frustrating tendency to disappear completely at times, leading one into dead ends. Thus, despite the cool day, I soon became quite warm with the necessary advancing and backtracking.

Recalling my previous trip I kept as much as possible to the north side of the stream and encountered no impassable obstacles. Occasionally I had to slosh across large swampy areas where the ground water slowly oozes out to add its bit to the rushing stream. At other times I had to almost crawl under overhanging branches or climb sweatily up into the sage.

But the scenery can only be described as superb and the day was a delight. The green of the foliage in the little valley contrasted strikingly with the

The author with Boundary Peak in the background. It's not Mt. Everest, but a tough climb all the same.

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

dry yellow of the surrounding hills. The stream tumbled in low gurgles over waterfalls eighteen inches high and rushed down through its bed that in places was almost closed over by the grass above. At other times there were tiny sandy beaches and the stream split and rejoined confusingly as it laced its way down the valley.

I had been walking less than two hours when I neared the end of the valley. Here three circular areas of hummocked grass about a hundred feet across mark the three springs that begin Trail Canyon Creek. This is the last source of water on the mountain and the place I had determined to camp. As I climbed slowly through this last meadow a small band of wild horses galloped away from me up the head of the canyon. Behind, now that I was above the trees, I could look out over the desert plains of Esmeralda county to the east. I pitched my tent on the grass between the newborn stream and the desert sage at 9,600 feet, still 3,600 feet from the top of Boundary Peak.

I finished setting up camp just before the sun set behind the bulk of the mountain and as the shadows slowly slid up the encircling hills I had my first chance to give the surrounding beauty its due. To the east, down the canyon, I could see at least five successive ranges of hills rising toward the distant horizon. Framing this view on either side rose the steep sage covered desert hills with occasional wild horses browsing contentedly on their brows a thousand feet above me. And finally, to the west, was the mass of Boundary Peak, its form now totally in shadow, rising in a silent sweep of granite to the pale cloudless sky. Birds twittered faintly in the distance, the stream rippled busily down its course, and the cool evening breeze began to come down off the mountain slopes.

I quickly lit my stove and began preparing dinner. As the light faded I sat and watched the shadow of the mountain stretch out further and further across the plain and savored my warm meal. The first stars began to appear and the mountain became first a silhouette and then only a darker presence against the blackness of the sky. As I fixed my traditional camping cup of hot chocolate Jupiter rose with a start over the hills and somewhere I could hear the horses running and neighing with animal joy. At 9 o'clock I crawled into my sleeping bag; it was 38 degrees.

The light had just begun to pale the sky when I woke, for I wanted to be off by 7 o'clock. We had started too late on our last attempt and this was another mistake I did not intend to repeat. It was just below freezing and as I quickly dressed against the cold, a small herd of deer grazed up the canyon. Blades of grass in the stream were covered with little jackets of ice and the wildflowers patiently awaited the coming warmth.

The sun rose rapidly as I ate breakfast, turning the land first a brilliant pink, then a strong yellow color. For the first time the light was directly on the mountain and I was able to study my proposed climbing route.

From the map I had divided the climb into three segments. The first was a 1,200 foot climb almost due west to Trail Canyon Saddle. From there I planned to turn south and climb another 1,400 feet to a minor summit at 12,200 feet. The third stage would cover the remaining 940 feet to the summit along the northeast ridge. Boundary Peak is not considered a difficult peak to climb from a technical point of view. It does however demand good physical condition and careful planning with respect to clothing, supplies, and scheduling. There is, for instance, no more water available above where I had camped.

Standing by my tent that brilliant morning I could see only one section, quite high on the mountain, that could possibly give me trouble. But from camp it was too far to see clearly and a proper evaluation would just have to wait. I picked up my

smaller pack and my camera and started off. Very quickly that difficult section, as well as the mountain's summit, disappeared behind the shoulder of a lower hill. I would not see either again until I had finished the first two stages of the climb.

Once past the hummocked ground of the springs I was walking through the sage of the surrounding desert. I headed for the south side of the canyon intending to gradually work my way up the hillside to the saddle rather than confronting the steep canyon terminus directly. Soon I entered a small pine forest which survived by holding the water of winter's snows against the shadowed back of the mountain. We had climbed in October before and here we had already encountered fields of snow. But now, in mid-September, the way was clear, over fallen debris of the scruffy pines and the sloping fields of small granite rocks. Behind, the view out over the plains became increasingly more grand.

In less than an hour I reached Trail Canyon Saddle, completely above all but the smallest, hardiest plants. For the first time I had a view to the north, down into Queen Valley and the land beyond. This had been our highest point previously and we had found large areas of snow and all the mountain above us shrouded in cloud. This time the ground was completely clear and the sky was an infinite dark blue.

After a rest I started up again from the saddle. I was climbing south now, the early sun coming strong from my left. There was also a heavy cold wind coming from the east and I tried to stay slightly over onto the north face of the slope. The ground was littered with small granite boulders, almost antiseptic in their whiteness, and occasional clumps of hardy grass. The incline was steady but neither steep nor dangerous. Though it was tiring work, glances down into the saddle and the hills beyond showed that I was rapidly gaining altitude.

It took nearly an hour and a half to complete this stage. As I worked my way to the east side of peak 12,200 I could see the little orange dot that was my tent, now 2,500 feet below. Upon rounding the peak I could finally see the summit pyramid of the mountain, here only about 1,000 feet higher. It was somewhat sobering. The difficult section I had seen from below did not seem any easier. Rather than going over it I would have to go to one side or the other. As the north side was still in shadow I decided to go to the south. I also realized that what I'd thought was the summit from below was only a high shoulder on the mountain. The true summit was about 200 feet higher and had another difficult pitch just below it. But I determined to take each as I came to it and to go slowly and carefully. While resting in my shirtsleeves I was amazed that the temperature was only 34 degrees. The wind had died away and I was perfectly comfortable.

After another rest stop I set out again, this time more slowly and with more frequent halts. The altitude was beginning to tell. My difficult section proved to be a jumble of large granite boulders. To get around them I worked my way almost horizontally out onto the face of the mountain and then climbed directly back up onto the ridge. The chief dangers were those of slipping and falling or of dislodging a precariously balanced boulder. But I went very carefully, trying each new position before putting my full weight on it, and was above the section in about fifteen minutes.

The Sierra Club provides a register at the summit. Signing your name is the reward for hearty climbers. And then the trip down.

An hour had passed before I called a longer rest stop, still 400 feet from the summit. I sat contentedly and looked out over the bright world so far below. Nearby I noticed a little Alpine Gold, its yellow flowers a vibrant color on that grey slope.

The ridge I was following turned slowly to the north again and I could begin to see the dark forms of the White Mountains to the south and west. Some still had small patches of snow near their summits. A few minutes more and the ugly dark summit of Montgomery Peak came into view. The second difficult section proved to be much less of a problem than the first and I slowly realized I was almost there. Another few steps and it was done, there was no more up to go; I had arrived on the

summit of Boundary Peak!

No matter how often I climb, or no matter how easy or difficult the peak, I always experience a deep surge of elation when I reach the summit. And this was no exception. My feelings and my view were ample reward for my effort.

To the south were the White Mountains, their summits and saddles amazingly flat. Between their mass and the spire of Montgomery Peak I could see the distant snow-clad wall of the Sierra Nevada. Everywhere else my vision was bounded only by the distant curve of the horizon. I could easily see Walker Lake 60 miles to the north. To the east the desert stretched out in a fascinating array of brown, ochre, and red.

I spent over an hour on the summit, eating my lunch, admiring the view and trying to imagine what a flock of Clark's Nutcrackers would find to eat at that altitude. Finally I pulled out the Sierra Club book placed on Boundary Peak in 1947, signed my name, and started down.

One of the joys of climbing is that you can come down much faster than you can climb. By choosing a long talus slope that I could descend in great slow lopes by digging in with my heels I was back in camp in just over ninety minutes. At one point I descended 1,200 feet in twenty minutes.

Back on the green grass of that gentle valley I could look up to where I had gone. It was a beautiful soft day with gentle winds and a warm sun, singing birds and splashing water. It had been a good day to live.

That evening I enjoyed once again the slow evolution of day into night, and the next morning I was not nearly so quick to arise. After a leisurely breakfast I broke camp and began my walk out. It promised to be yet another glorious fall day.

As I reached the car and began the slow drive back I realized it had been nearly two days since I had seen another human being. I had been by myself, but not alone, surrounded even as I was by only a small fraction of nature's wonder. For a while I had had time to look and listen, to be quiet, and to see again the beauty of the natural world. In that lay the real joy of climbing Boundary Peak. □

the light of day

High Rock Lake, Northern Washoe County.

Duck Flat, Northwest of Gerlach.

It's the same old sun, wherever you find it. Or is it? Bill Fuller takes pictures of the sun. Rather, he records what it does to the scenery around Nevada. And where the sun shines more than 300 days a year, there's plenty of opportunity.

Stillwater, near Fallon.

The Sierra, near Lake Tahoe.

found and

lost

A. S. (Buck) Erwin

The Snake River winds its way through the width of the state of Idaho, cutting an ever deeper canyon that separates Idaho from Nevada. Much of the country it winds through is so rough that it has never been explored in modern times. Back when the pioneers were trying to find their way to Oregon, many were the trails that were made across both sides of the Snake River. Unfriendly Indians on the north side made another more southerly route seem easier to cover. But here again were the lava beds of Nevada that formed nearly impassable barriers to wagon trains. The Paiute Indian who spoke a language that even Kit Carson, who guided Fremont through that land, could not speak nor decipher, was a formidable enemy. Indian depredations caused the United States government to establish Indian forts along the many wagon trails to stop the depredations and to help the people who would settle Oregon with loyal Americans and secure that fertile country against the claims of England, Russia and Spain.

Fort McDermitt came into being and became an important base for cavalrymen who quickly brought the unmounted Paiutes into enough subjection that the Oregon Trail became safe from their raids. Necessarily some of the expeditions against the Paiutes led them down into the canyons and rough bad lands and lava beds of the Snake River. Some of these mounted troopers did not return and their remains were never found in a country as big and broken as this. History records them as "missing in action."

Following a strong hunch and the vagaries of a modern day scintillator, my partner and I followed a deep canyon leading into the Snake River Canyon. Water we found at certain places and wild game around these places enough that our supplies lasted for a month instead of the week we had planned. That no white man knew of this canyon and no modern day red man, was proven by the number of arrowheads and spear points we found strewn around each water hole. The hunt for uranium and its fortune lost some of its zest in the hunt for evidences of an earlier Indian culture in this lost canyon. Then the finding of four brass shells from an ancient Springfield 45-70 told us that at some time a hundred years ago or more a United States soldier had gone this way. We sat near this spring and pondered about this find. Could it have been a soldier or could it have been an Indian with a captured weapon. We decided to circle this spot and see what other evidences we could bring to light. Strange feelings these, to walk where no white man had been for a hundred years. A walled canyon whose only intercourse with modern day civilization would have been the fleeting sight of an airplane. We had circled higher and higher up the steep sides of the the canyon when we both saw it on the other side of the canyon, across from us – the mouth of a cave.

continued

I won't tell you what seeing that cave did to us, we fairly flew down and across and up the other side and then where was the cave? Search and search and still there was no cave. Both experienced desert dwellers, we were familiar with mirages that showed distant lakes, with palm trees swaying, where we knew only endless salt flats dry as dust, but this view of a cave mouth was too close to be a mirage and we both knew it. Finally Bill climbed back down into the canyon's bed and up the other side to signal me which way to climb to reach the cave's mouth. Two hours passed before Bill again found the point where the cave had been seen and then the wild signaling across the canyon up to where the cave opening did not show. I was within ten feet of it and still with a half mile of open canyon wall that looked barren of cave mouths before my eyes. Bill's frantic waving seemed crazy until I stumbled almost over the top of it. I sat down to wait as Bill came running down the canyon side and up my wall while I waited as per our agreement. We would look it over together. I guess we both saw the muzzle of the rifle at the same time, pointed right at our hearts and both of us looked long and hard at the man seated with his back to the wall of the cave, a picture out of one of Frederick Remington's prints. An ancient cavalryman with his rifle across his knees covering us and all else that dared to enter this cave, where he had taken refuge from who knows what. It seemed like an hour although it must have been minutes before Bill had told him that we meant no harm and to drop his rifle and then it came to both of us at the same time: this man was dead. He had been dead for a hundred years but in the poorly lighted cave he looked menacingly alive and the threat of that ancient Springfield might still be dangerous because it was still loaded and cocked and his ancient mummified fingers still were on the trigger.

A torch of ancient wood showed us that he had made a stand here against Indians, many arrows lay on the floor of his cave, some of them burned, probably having been burning when they had been shot into the cave. His old cavalry saddle and saddle bags lay neatly stacked, dried almost to the consistency of stone, seams split apart and forty large gold nuggets and a United States twenty dollar gold piece lay among them. How we wished that we could have a long talk with this soldier, but his ancient skin had drawn tight over his jaws and we realized that his secret could only come after long and careful search if it ever did come.

We both cursed the day that had brought us into this desolate canyon without camera and flashlight. Then Bill turned on his scintillator in the sun at the mouth of the cave. Quickly he turned it back to less sensitive ranges as its needle kicked clear across scale and bumped against the pin and suddenly we knew that golden nuggets and hundred year old secrets had suddenly become insignificant against the readings of the scintillator. When two men prospect together they get so that they think the same thoughts at the same times and I looked at Bill and said, "Bill, will the Jeep start after a month up on the canyon rim?" He grinned and said, "You didn't have to say it, but we had better get back and find out."

The climb back to the Jeep took two days and good old Jeep, dependable old Jeep, started just like it was within a half mile of a good garage. We were a full day making some five miles to a faint road because we took turns sweeping out our Jeep tracks and then we drove down this road a good fifteen miles and back so that there would be no tell-tales to guide anybody else down to our doubly rich find. We both looked for signs that we had stopped and turned off the road. Our sweeping job had been a good one for our sign-wise eyes found no evidence and we both knew that given one good windstorm and no one could possibly follow that trail unless he could follow bruised sagebrush and we had avoided as much of that as possible. How good a job we had done we now know.

No one could possibly find it including us. We have made five trips back armed with mineral light, flashlights and cameras and at this writing we don't know where this find is although I don't believe that it can elude us much longer except that we can't seem to agree to where we turned off the old road. We have both taken turns at leading the way back from where we turned off. Our Jeep tracks are there. We have both flown over the country with a scintillator but due to dangerous air currents we haven't picked up any large body of uranium such as was indicated although there may be two thousand feet of overburden between where the plane was flying and any ore body. I haven't been able to be completely honest with any pilot because I can't have him locating it before we do and at this writing one of us may have to learn to fly a plane. In the meantime that old soldier still guards the entrance to a cave that may hold secrets worth millions.

One thing for sure: if someone finds it before we do he will look that Springfield in the eye for one awful moment. □

COMMENT

By Betty Orr

For some time I have entertained the notion that it is people of a mature age group who care most about conservation. They are the people who stand tall, breathe deeply and chant, "I am in love with this green earth . . ."

Or was it Charles Lamb who said that — about 150 years ago?

At any rate it was one of his admirers who pondered the fate of the green earth surrounding Lake Tahoe at a time when most Nevadans were digging up everything in sight. I am referring to Henry R. Mighels, first editor of Nevada's oldest newspaper, the *Carson City Nevada Appeal*. His delightful book is in the White Pine County Public Library collection and also at the Nevada State Library, Carson City. *SAGEBRUSH LEAVES*, Henry R. Mighels; Howard Bosqui & Company, San Francisco, 1879.

It may have been a soft, summer day when Mighels drove his team and wagon from Carson City to the rim of his beloved Lake Bigler which was later to become Lake Tahoe. I visualize Mighels perched silently on a gray rock, ice-blue water lapping tirelessly around him. Slim, silver aspen reach restless fingers to a high, cloudless sky. Now and then an inquisitive bluejay swoops down to investigate the pensive visitor.

But the young editor is oblivious to the sassy fellow. He is contemplating what could happen to his lovely retreat as gold-hungry miners tramp the delicate shores. "There it lies, as placid as a dewdrop," he writes, "a priceless diamond set in the hollow of the mighty hills . . . above the value of gold . . ." He puts together bright, crisp phrases for his paper.

Perhaps it is the endless rhythm of the waves which gives him a twinge of loneliness, an awareness of another time, another place. As he drove by Zephyr Cove, he'd stopped to take a drink of water from the brook that babbled across the road. There had been something about the air that recalled the pungent scent of Cape Hatterus. Later, he wrote:

"Can it be that weather has a direct influence on the nature of men? That the highlands, the lofty

Henry Mighels
A great Nevada wit.

COMMENT

tops of barely accessible peaks have always afforded not only a peculiarly pure air and water, hard trees and flowers but brave, free-spirited, strong-limbed men and women . . ."

Henry Mighels was a typical Nevadan of his time. Born in Norway, Maine, in 1830, he had moved to Ohio with his family when he was 17. For over a year he studied medicine under his father's instruction. At the same time he became interested in painting and sketching and gave serious thought to becoming an artist. But he was restless.

By 1850 he headed west. After some adventures in Central America he arrived in the new, bustling state of California where he worked first as a decorative sign painter. In a few years he was named local editor of the *Sacramento Bee*. Later he was the first editor of the new *Marysville Appeal*. By this time he was considered a brilliant, witty and able newspaper man. He also became knowledgeable and involved in the political scene.

He took time out to fight for the Union in the Civil War. He saw more than his share of battle action and was once badly wounded. Mighels was finally decorated and discharged — free to return to the West. He came this time to the new state of Nevada which attained statehood while he was at war.

He became owner and publisher of the Appeal with a new bride from Maine as his working partner. When it became obvious that his health was failing he worked with his wife to assemble the essays and bits and pieces which make up *Sagebrush Leaves*. He hoped it would be a source of income for his family if he should die.

At times Mighels' writings seemed to reveal a nostalgia for his former eastern home area. One spring he wrote:

"Now, here in Carson the leaves and branches are so thick in places that one may cheat himself into a pleasant fancy of green and wooded slopes and grassy vales beyond . . . and these damp mornings make the grass seem dewy."

In 1878, shortly before his death, Mighels' notes were written from the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, then later from the French Hospital there. He wrote that he could hear foghorns on the bay and tells of a visit to The Strand. Although death was near for him, he retained his interest and enthusiasm regarding issues of the times. Writing back to Carson, he expressed dissatisfaction with the general treatment of the Chinese. "As to the almost resistless tide of prejudice against John Chinaman, I don't know but what I think that a good deal of it is due to what a certain critic of Professor Huxley sharply defines as a 'slipshod deference to public opinion which is nobody's private opinion.' "

Before his illness, Mighels was much involved in Nevada politics. He ran for the Assembly on the Republican ticket. Elected, he was made speaker by acclamation and at the end of the session was honored by both parties. In 1878 he was the Republican nominee for Lieutenant Governor but was defeated due to treachery, according to one biographer.

I feel Mighels was a man wise in all things — as relevant as tomorrow. His observations on such adadventures as "Learning to Smoke" are charming and witty. He deals with children's propensity for wading in muddy, slushy water sans boots and their natural affinity for green apples. He discusses some clam fossils he finds in the Washoe Valley, seasons of the year, springtime courtships of his young neighbors. All things were special to Editor Mighels and he was able to relate all of this in a way that brings strong reader involvement.

This is a book to read on a rainy Tuesday and again on a miserable Thursday. Don't try to read it all at once. It would be better to follow the advice of Mighels' beloved Thoreau who observed that "Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written."

•

At about the same time Mighels was writing newspaper columns on conservation, a professional naturalist made the Nevada scene. *STEEP TRAILS*, John Muir, Norman S. Berg, Publisher "Selanraa" Dunwoody, Georgia, 1970 (Edited by William Frederic Bade) First Copyright, 1918, by Houghton, Mifflin.

Young John Muir
He saw beauty where others saw only profit.

John Muir, born in Scotland in 1830, came to this country when he was eleven years old. He grew up on a Wisconsin farm, attended the University of Wisconsin where he graduated and then taught some classes.

Like so many young people today, he wanted to see for himself exactly how his adopted country looked. After tramping over the Great Lakes area, Florida and Cuba, he headed west. In the 1870s we find him hiking all over California, Oregon and the territories of Washington, Utah and Alaska.

According to a John Muir book reviewed in this column a few years ago *(John Muir in Yosemite* by Shirley Sargent), the John Muir family home was in Martinez, California. But the great naturalist could not have spent much time there as he wrote no less than eight books about the wonders of the West. Two new editions of Muir's books which have been available for several years are "Stikeen, the Story of a Do" and "A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf."

There seems to be no area of Nevada that Muir failed to investigate. He observed that this state had been underendowed as far as fertile farm land and a good growing season. He thought that her last, best hope was the mineral content beneath the earth. He was very interested in pinon pinenuts and felt research would prove them to be exceedingly nutritious.

Like Mighels, John Muir held mining in low regard. As conservationists today find nothing to justify the giant operations of the mining industry, so these gentlemen were overcome with rage and horror to find Mother Earth so disturbed.

John Muir's wanderings were far from casual as is attested by the fact that he was honored in 1908 when the redwood forest of the Pacific Coast Ranges was named "Muir Woods." At one time he persuaded President Teddy Roosevelt to support an act of Congress which set aside 148,000,000 acres of forest reserves. Yosemite and Sequoia National Forests and Parks were largely a result of his influence. On one of his explorations he discovered and named Muir Glacier in Alaska. He also traveled extensively in Europe and Africa during his long lifetime.

Muir's writing was poetic prose. In a chapter in *Steep Trails* entitled "A Geologist's Winter Walk" he describes a special place in the Sierra: "The moon is looking down into the canyon, and how marvelously the great rocks kindle to her light!"

Russell R. Elliott was born in the smelter town of McGill in eastern Nevada and grew up in the copper mining county of White Pine. After graduating from the University of Nevada, he took advanced degrees at the University of Washington and the University of California. He is presently a professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno. Elliott has written several books concerned with the history of mining in this state but his latest book is a much needed, total history. *HISTORY OF NEVADA*, Russell R. Elliott, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1973. This is a definitive work which any history buff will appreciate.

According to Elliot, it was during Nevada's depression years, 1880-1900, that legislators passed a law which gave this state its first chance at the tourist dollar. In 1897 Nevada became the second state to legalize prize fights. The fee was set at $1,000 per event. When the governor asked the Assembly to come up with plans for some much needed revenue, prize fighting seemed to be the solution, to the disgust of the rest of the nation. But these were "bust" years as far as mining was concerned; Nevada didn't have many options. Immediately the World's Heavyweight Championship bout was scheduled and the fee paid. The fight lasted fourteen rounds and left "Gentleman Jim" Corbett defeated and made Bob Fitzsimmons the new champion. □

ALIVE AND WELL...

by Richard Menzies

"I've never seen anything as incredible as you've got here today. Plus the sunshine and the beer, it must be the greatest show anywhere I've ever been to . . . probably anywhere in the world."

The speaker who was from London, England, had logged twelve thousand miles by motorbike in the states, and found himself far from crowds and smack in the middle of the fabled West. And he hadn't been disappointed.

It was a fine September day under a crystalline blue cloudless sky; the central Nevada town of Gabbs, short on shade trees and long on hospitality, was hosting its annual ten thousand dollar super picnic. There was the traditional free barbeque with food enough for three thousand guests, free beer and soft drinks to wash it all down, and free entertainment worth cycling half way around the world to see.

Among the native sons and favorite sons, foreign and domestic visitors, were also some of Nevada's premier hard rock miners — experts at such esoteric sports as mucking and hard rock drilling. Also several volunteer fire department crews from throughout central Nevada had come to outsquirt each other in the annual Gabbs invitational waterfight.

In the waterfight event, two opposing hose crews face each other, taking aim on a barrel suspended from an overhead tight wire. On signal, each tries to squirt the target barrel to the other team's goal and hold it there against the opposing stream of water.

Last year's champs from Douglas County were the team to beat, but try as they might, nobody could. After a series of soggy elimination heats, during which the desert dust as well as several spectators got watered down, Douglas emerged victorious, holding off a good effort by the second place team from Hawthorne.

Another event you don't see every day is the annual state championship mucking contest, which

It's a fireman's holiday, jousting with another group of volunteers.

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

A drilling contest (top) has to be a part of any old mining town's festivities. Do these guys ever break a finger? Just on the hand with the fingers.

And then there's mucking. Why does somebody shovel a couple of tons of rock from one place to another? Just for fun, of course.

IN GABBS!

pits man against a stopwatch and a bin full of gravel. Armed only with scoopshovels, the contestants work at a pace that would make a strawboss beam, shoveling the rocks from the full bin to an empty one.

When it was all over, a sweaty and dust-caked young man from Dixie Valley, Russ Turley, had beaten second place finisher Bud Blaylock by only two seconds, winning with a time of 5:53.

An event that draws blood as well as sweat is the single jack drilling contest. The object is to drill a hole in a block of solid granite, using a series of steel bits and a four-pound hammer. An assistant pours water on the drill and marks time for the driver; at the end of ten minutes the contestant who has drilled the deepest hole wins.

Traditionally, the event is dominated by old hard rock miners who used to set dynamite holes this way, but a few promising youngsters have also taken up the sport. One of them, 17-year-old Jerry Nevin of Virginia City, kept hammering away despite a smashed knuckle to place fourth with a hole of more than four and a half inches.

But the top match of the day was between old rivals, last year's winner Fred Andreason of Virginia City, and the former champion, 66-year-old Louis Gibellini of Eureka, who holds the state record of eleven inches and a fraction.

For the first few minutes, it was a heads-on match, but then Gibellini, who had been plagued with broken bits the past two years, began to fall behind when his drill became stuck. Meanwhile, Andreason kept going like a human jackhammer, keeping the rhythm that is all-important.

When it was over, Andreason had won again with a depth of nine and 14/32 inches, with Gibellini second at seven and 25/32nds. For their efforts, the top two hard rock drillers in Nevada went home with the lion's share of a thousand dollars in prize money, and one English adventurer with a memory of the Old West, still alive and doing well in Gabbs. □

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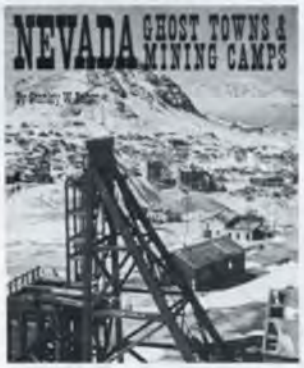

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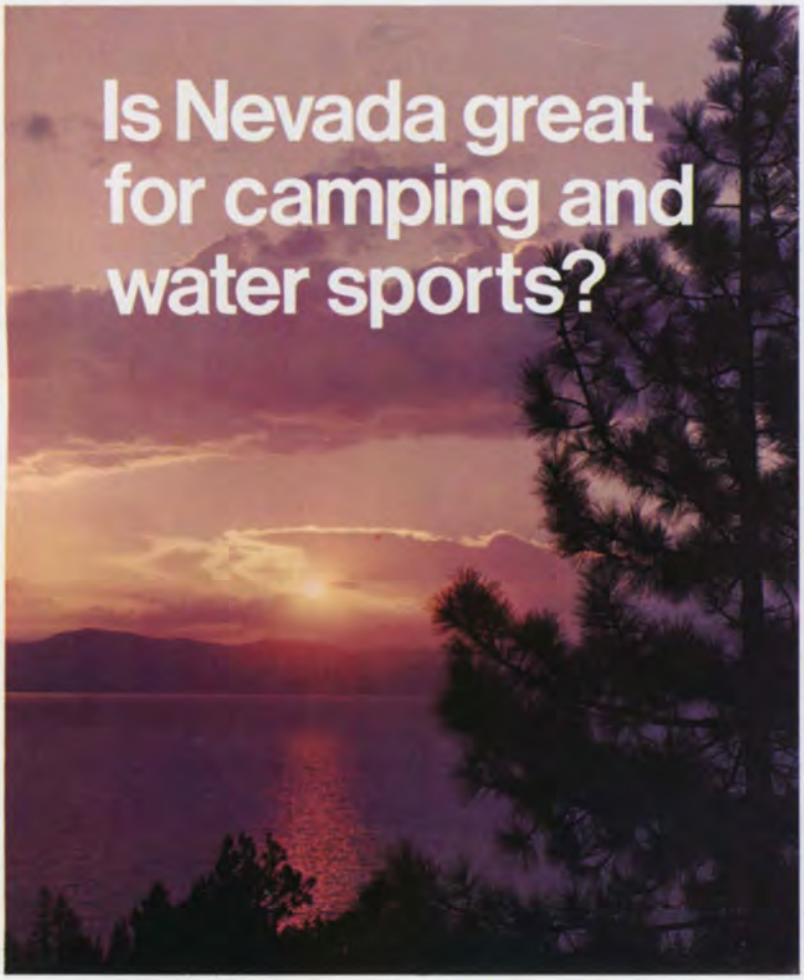

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