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# NEVADA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE REAL WEST

DECEMBER 1983 \$1.75

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OF AN  
UNDERCOVER  
WAITER





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# Editorial

## On getting lost in a four-block town.

I recently took a statewide trip to attempt to update *Nevada Magazine's* photo files. I drove 1,800 miles in seven days, worked a 93-hour week, blew a tire in Ruby Valley, and was arrested in Ely for "wasting a precious resource." I was also fined five dollars by a most understanding judge who told me, "I like your magazine."

It was a great trip on those long, straight highways that once an hour dip over a pass, sometimes revealing a ranch or gas station in the next valley. Best of all were the towns, rustic and friendly, where your visits often turn into memorable encounters.

Consider Battle Mountain.

A kink in the road between Elko and Winnemucca, and the only town that is proud to mark its closest mountain with the enormous white letters "B.M.," Battle Mountain can be a wonderful surprise to the persistent.

It was late August, and the brush growing around town were islands in a gigantic pool of water. The desert was green because of a very wet summer, and the heavy clouds that rumbled around the mountains seemed to promise more of a downpour. Cows were idling in the puddles underneath the enormous power lines that led to Sierra Pacific's plant at Valmy. Numerous bumps and tailings on the mountainsides attested to decades of work by miners and prospectors.

Battle Mountain is a town of 3,800 souls, many of them newcomers, some of whom really believe that their local hunting and fishing is the best in the state. It is a small town famous for deep, lovely "Lander Blue" turquoise. It's also good for barite, silver, and rattlesnakes. Some local ranchers are envied throughout the West for their talent for raising prize-winning horses and fat, healthy cows on high-desert alkali. Ranchers like the Marvels. The Filipinis. The Venturaccis.

The town claims several of the best saddle-bronc riders in the world. Brothers Mike, Joe, and Pete Marvel have all ridden at rodeo's National Finals in Oklahoma City. In 1978 Joe Marvel earned the title, "World Champion."

I had a lunch date in Battle Mountain with Warren Storie, chairman of the Lander County Commission, and Bob Hanks, county administrator. They were to meet me at the Owl Club to talk about what was going on in their favorite part of Nevada.

I arrived in town right on time, at high noon, and saw the sign for the Owl Motel and, further down the same block, the sign for the Owl Club. I parked, walked through a door marked "Entrance," and asked for the men I was to meet.

The cashier had never heard of them. I

telephoned their homes and got no answer, so I sat down for lunch. I talked to a waitress named Frankie Wright, who was starting a strawberry farm a couple of miles out of town. "My husband Johnny and I have already prepared the ground," she said. "We'll be seeding in April and harvest next June." The Wrights hope to sell fresh berries to the biggest motor hotels within 100 miles. When Frankie gave me my check, for the Nevada Hotel, I realized I was in the wrong joint.

In a city less than four blocks long, my error seemed impossible. How could I get lost in Battle Mountain?

By the time I got to the Owl, just a few feet away, several people steered me toward a large red booth in the corner of the coffee shop. I was immediately entertained by a casino owner, a miner, a singer, and a culture lover along with the county officials. I was told about the gold mines, local entertainment such as the fiddlers' contest held in April, and the planned growth of the airport. I was informed about Battle Mountain's Young Thespians and a children's dance group led by Theresa Marvel called The Dance Factory.

Since it was county fair weekend, I was led down to the civic center, which was filled with artwork including needlework, paintings, quilts, photography, woodwork, macrame, and petit point. Sections in the giant room housed vegetables, flower arrangements, baked goods, canned foods, and a "Women in Mining" minerals exhibit.

In the lobby tiny girls danced to a cassette recorder; outside a bunch of 4H kids showed their sheep, hogs, and heifers. Pre-teener Cyndy Rogers had bought her piglet in Fallon. "Her name's Sally and she was born March 15, 1983. I fed her Pig Starter because I didn't think she'd make weight. Then I fed her Pig Grower. After the show, she'll go to market."

At the same time, across from casino row on Front Street in the Lions Club Park, the Sundowners, a rugged-looking bunch of middle-aged motorcycle riders from Nevada, Utah, and California were holding a benefit for muscular dystrophy. They were offering barbecued chicken, cold beer, and live music and hoping for donations to the worthy cause. During one country number, a heavily-biceped biker sidled up to me and whispered, "We boiled the chicken in a pressure cooker last night so that it would be nice and tender." I looked at his black leather jacket, studs, and big boots, then glanced at his Harley, and told him I believed him.—*Caroline J. Hadley*

# Letters

## Slow Walk and a Rush

I'm glad that you were able to squeeze in the Ely piece so soon, although I've yet to see the check. Such is the life of a free lancer. I've had similar troubles with the State of Utah, where my check has been left to marinate on the desk of a minor functionary (code name Debbi) while I waited for the state legislature to convene and approve authorization of payment. My theory is, in the State of Nevada, all checks are relayed to the nearest casino and plopped on the "Don't Come" line. If the dice roll right, I'm paid; if not, well, the check don't come.

Richard Menzies  
Salt Lake City, UT.

It was a pleasant surprise to find Jim Crandall's story about P.E. Larson, gold rush photographer in the September/October issue. My sister and I are delighted with the article about our dad. Crandall writes vividly of the excitement and vitality of Goldfield as a gold rush town and makes an interesting story of P.E. Larson's career as a photographer of those times. Of interest to me is how he has so skillfully selected his material from the collection in the Nevada State Museum and put the bits and pieces together in a lively account of the Goldfield years.

Adelieu Larson  
Coos Bay, OR.

## Harry in Hall of Fame

I have just read your editorial in the September/October issue of Nevada in which you give laurels to my good friend Harry Webb. Unfortunately, there are not many oldtimers left who know the Old West and can tell from firsthand experiences what it was like, and Harry Webb is a past master at spinning yarns based on true facts. I am happy that the Cody Centennial honored him for his stint spent with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and for the material that he furnished to that organization. It was a well deserved honor. Now if that august body, the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City would acknowledge him as one of the oldest living cowboys of the old days, Harry would be properly honored.

Dewey Tidwell  
Las Cruces, NM

*You need wait no longer, Tidwell. Harry Webb was given the Wrangler Award for a Lifetime Contribution to the Western Heritage by the board of directors of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame at their September 1983 meeting. He will be honored early next year at a site to be named soon.—Ed.*

In regard to Harry Webb's story about Cigarette George (September/October '83).

My father and I were working for Mr. George Goodfellow the winter of 1919 and we had to move a herd into Palisade to ship to California. We had plenty of hay and Mr. Goodfellow drove the hay wagon on ahead of the herd and they followed it all the way through a driving snow storm. Sure brings back memories.

Norman Jackson  
Enid, OK.

## Where It Began

Howdy:

The ranch on which the color photo was shot (Tallman in the Saddle," May/June '83) is the "T Quarter Circle Ranch" owned by Hank and Sis Harrer and the Hank and Jane Angus family in Winnemucca. Equipment and horse power courtesy of Frosty and Nancy Tipton. This is the ranch where my rodeo career actually began. Credit is due to all of these people. Thank you.

Bob Tallman  
Reno, NV

I wouldn't give up my copies of *Nevada Magazine* for all the tea in China. I have been receiving this terrific publication for almost a year now and will continue to subscribe until you close your doors, which I hope shall never happen. My wife and I have recently purchased a 26-foot travel trailer, and we're interested in all the out of the way places you attempt to cover in your articles. Which brings me to a suggestion: I would like to see a listing or map that notes the location of travel trailer/travel home sites located throughout the State of Nevada. I'm aware of the sites in the Las Vegas area and Laughlin area, but not of any other part of the state.

Keep up the good work as I know you will. I just hope you never run out of material since you make my day and the remainder of the month when my copy arrives in far-away Kansas.

Milt Sheely, Sr.  
Manhattan, KS.

## Take the A-Trail

I am writing in reference to the article by Richard Menzies entitled "Going Into the High Country" in your July/August issue.

His comments concerning the Appalachian Trail were not well received. In particular, "It occurred to me one might just as well camp out in Central Park or stay home with the ranks of hemorrhoid sufferers who gather 'round the nightly news." This comment not only reflects his total inexperience and ignorance of the Appalachian Trail system, but also an incredible arrogance by your magazine to print such a misstatement.

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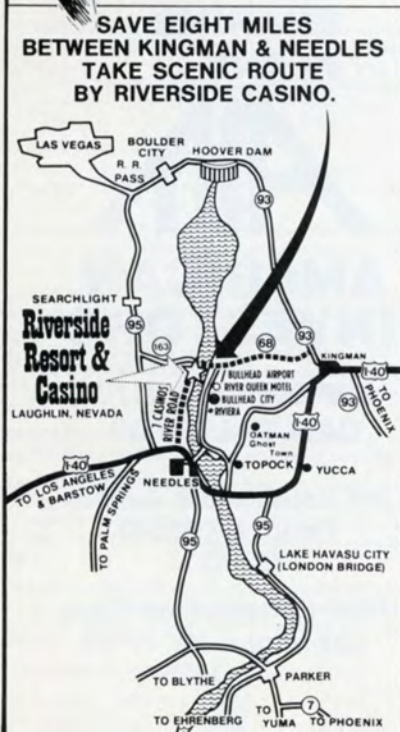
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such an insulting piece of work about another part of the country? Many areas of the Appalachian Trail are quite remote and it is to the credit of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Appalachian Trails Conference, and other outing organizations that maintain the trail that such a trail can exist in the East for a distance of 2,130 miles. It is incredible that a trail of this length can exist with as little influence from the outside world and civilization as one can find on the Appalachian Trail. I suggest Mr. Menzies and the editors of *Nevada Magazine* should try hiking the A.T. before printing any more such slanderous material.

Indignantly yours,  
Robert L. Badger  
Blacksburg, VA.

#### A Manor of Type

I am a subscriber to your fine magazine and I read with interest the July/August '83 issue, including the editorial explaining how your "typesetting and proofreading (normally superb)" were at fault for the excerpt from Richard Menzies' "Medicine on the Bargen Plan" making *The New Yorker*.

Explaining the "manner" of how the mistake occurred perhaps also explains why your typesetter and proofreader did not mind their "manors," as is apparent in John Grissim's article, "The Golden Boy of the Silver State," in July/August '83.

Marlow Gregers  
Pasadena, CA.

I recently subscribed to *Nevada Magazine*, with which I have been familiar for years as I purchase copies when I go home to Boulder City to visit.

However, there is probably more in your recent issue than I read in it. What are you using for type size, 8 point? How about upping the size of type to a readable 12 point? You may know that some years ago *Esquire* almost went under by going to 8 point type.

George Gleason  
Springfield, MO.

Are you sure 12 point is what you want?—Ed.

We have subscribed to the *Nevada Magazine* for several years and appreciate what an outstanding job is being done. We send the magazine to our married daughter in the National Park Service, Padre Island, Texas, and to our cousins in Pocklington, York, England. We find the *Nevada Magazine* a very much appreciated Christmas gift to our relations.

G. Merriweather, Sr.  
Henderson, NV

#### Picture Hunters

Thank you for all of your kindness and the lunch and above all I am super happy about winning the Pentax Camera ("Great Nevada Picture Hunt Winners," September/October

'83). If you don't mind I would like to add a "Letter to the Editor." I am sure it is you and your co-workers that make *Nevada Magazine* the great magazine that it is. I gave up *Arizona Highways* and extended *Nevada*. You have such a variety of interesting information. I am sure there is something for everyone in every issue.

Norma Giudici  
Santa Clara, CA.

Without reading your article about the Photo Contest, I surmised that your Art Director was the JUDGE period. I'm surprised you let him get away with that kind of immaturity.

Patty Atcheson  
Reno, NV.

I was drawn to your magazine when I came across your July/August '81 issue and read your special guide to Virginia City. As I have a reincarnated bit of Mark Twain in myself I read with fascination your story, "Twain, DeQuille & the Comstock Classics" written by Phillip Finch. I am a writer for a small-town newspaper where I have adopted a Twainian style of humor column—this article kindled the flame in me and brought me to realize Twain's power of the pen. Visits to Virginia City as well as Carson City always prove to be pleasurable and that issue was superbly presented—sorry it took two years to tell you about it!

Ever since I saw that issue I wanted more of your magazine and so I subscribed. Other  
(Continued on page 22)



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LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU PHOTOS



# Steppin' Out in Las Vegas

Million-dollar shows, main-room stars, and the people who turn flops into hits.

By Bill Willard

**J**ohnny Carson, always quick with a quip, wasn't joking one day this summer in Las Vegas when he wistfully remembered his starring years on the Strip.

"I worked at the Sahara for 16 years, but I haven't worked there for a couple of years. I really kind of miss it when I come here," declared the comedian, whose Carson Broadcasting Company owns Southern Nevada's KVVU-TV. Then came the no-surprise. "I have to come back and start working some of the rooms again. You have the best showrooms in the world here."

Las Vegas is recognized as a world-class star center. One far-off visitor, Margarita Mikaelian, a director of the Moscow Satire Theatre, was so intrigued about the city that she described it as "a large theater."

Closer to home, two writers had a most complimentary view of Las Vegas. In the Sunday travel section of the *Los Angeles Times* a few months ago, Beverly

Beyer and Ed Rabey whooped, "Las Vegas pulls out all the stops trying to say it loves you."

And this panegyric a couple of paragraphs later: "Sure, Vegas is the all-American safety-valve city, where Bronx candy manufacturers, Wyoming ranchers, Denver doctors, Chicago secretaries and a cross section of other upstanding types come regularly to blow off steam..."

They're blowing off steam in the 24-hour bacchanalia of fun and games and entertainment. Every type of visitor person is staggered by the huge marquees lighting up names of legendary entertainers, fancy revues, and a lot of those current star performers named "Gourmet Buffet \$3.95."

What's happening in Las Vegas? Well, everything and nothing and nothing new. The cycle is coming 'round again, and already there are makings of Vegastyle Star Wars.

In recent years many of the important topstars, legendary entertainers indeed, vanished from Vegastages. In their places it is widely believed that production shows or revues, some leeringly tagged "T&A with feathers," have taken over.

Not true.

True, a second line of individual performers and acts have now assumed center stage and marquee space. A few years ago they were merely blips on the overall scope.

There are a host of entertainers who bypass Las Vegas and the chore of two shows a night or a dozen a week, preferring twice as much money per night in concerts, fairs, and festivals. Now, when some of those names play Las Vegas, it is hailed as a "special event." But some topstars are still around.

### The Strip's Big Three

Although much has been made of the unbearable freight of salaries demanded, causing some establishments to rush to production shows, this excuse never did apply to two of the best of the genre, "Jubilee" at MGM Grand and "Lido de Paris" at the Stardust. Nor does it apply to the Tropicana's "Folies Bergere."

Both the Donn Arden-produced "Jubilee" and "Lido" shows are the standards, the givens, by which other such shows are judged. With various acts spaced between spectacular dance scenes or mighty catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods, virgins sacrificed on burning temple altars, and the like, the accent is on lavish opulence and wham-bam-alacazam pizzazz.

"Jubilee," in the Grand's Ziegfeld Theatre, is the best of its kind in the entire world. Only one other stage could possibly handle some of the effects, and that stage is at the MGM Grand in Reno, where "Hello, Hollywood, Hello," another Arden maxi, contains similar technical wonders and typical generosity to the public with fair minimum prices. To ogle the sinking of the *Titanic* and Samson getting even with Delilah within a \$10-million boggler, the freight for "Jubilee" is \$23.50 per person including cocktails.

The "Lido" at the Stardust is a bargain at \$17.50 including cocktails. This show was a daring concept in 1958 when the Stardust



With extravagant productions on some of the largest stages in the free world, you can see shows that shake with earthquakes, floods, fantasy, and song.

opened and has been a consistent winner in the many editions over the years. It may be typical of the old-fashioned choreographic style of Arden, kept churning by his minions, but the public never stops straining at the velvet ropes to be seated and watch, eyes and mouths agape.

The "Folies Bergere" has been the Tropicana's savior. A dinner show for \$16.95 and midnight cocktailerie for \$13.95, the Jerry Jackson marvel with the greatest of all "Can Can" finales, refurbished at a mere \$500,000 a couple of years ago when it began to look threadbare, offers a spanking new edition, No. 16, which bowed in September. It cost a million to remount and revitalize, peanuts when amortized over the years.

### As Old As Vaudeville

When Henry Lewin, the Hilton executive veep in charge of everything and whose calling card bears only one word, "Millionaire," banished superstars from the Las Vegas Hilton stage more than a year ago, there were dire cries to match the hues of the Hilton rainbow logo. The hotel chain had bought the Reno Sahara from Del Webb Corporation, and with it a prancy effort titled, "Bal du Moulin Rouge." The show could not transfer to Las Vegas without a massive shot of capital (nobody at Hilton gives the real amount) and new choreography by Walter Painter, with extensive production scenes encompassing a Gringo-styled Mexican sortie within the Gallic rounds, a large cast, and several acts, including the seventh or eleventh edition of everybody's favorite elephant, Tanya, star of the "Le Monde du Cirque" dazzler.

But notwithstanding the lure of Tanya and millions of \$\$\$, "Moulin Rouge," as it became abbreviated, simply bombed, laid inert with only few showgoers scattered around both shows nightly.

Then came a "new" idea of firing up interest by placing a star name atop "MR." Lewin was cute about the changes, terming them "phases," but not until he and entertainment director Dick Lane arrived at Phase 2 with Suzanne Somers, did "MR" translate as magic. Unable to gain any consistent attention as a headliner elsewhere on the Strip in several tries, she simply was a knockout at the Hilton and turned the show around for 16 weeks, building momentum. Somers became a star that did not, however, cost the Hilton a fortune. Phase 3 finds the linguistically-elusive musical bubbler Charo keeping the spark alive through November, when Somers is expected to return. All of Charo's charm, some offbeat but fine acts, and a heightened "MR" is indeed a breeze at \$16.50 for dinner show with more than an ordinary menu and \$12.50 for the midnight soiree with cocktails.

The star policy within a production show is as old as vaudeville and older. Even the Greeks had a word for it. The most vivid example in recent Las Vegas history is the Siegfried & Roy emergence. They were stars of the "Lido," an unprecedented elevation four years ago. Under the aegis of Irving Feld and Kenneth Feld and careful personal management by Bernie Yuman, the world's No. 1 illusionist duo were starred in the circus "Beyond Belief" two years ago in the Frontier Hotel's Beyond Belief showroom.

The Felds, among other ventures, own and operate Ringling Brothers/Barnum & Bailey Circus, so it is no wonder that Siegfried & Roy have all the trappings of the Big Top in one of the best tickets in Las Vegas, every show jammed to the doors at a base price of \$26.50 with cocktails. There is also a once-a-month "family show" where the topless nudes put their tops back on. The "Lido" also goes chaste from time to time.



Stars like Tom Jones, Joan Rivers, and Wayne Newton are staples of the Las Vegas galaxy, the kind of entertainers who keep the showrooms filled and the tables humming. Their salaries also are out of this world.

Those are the High Five production shows of Las Vegas. No less successful in their own right are the two ice-dance revues, "City Lites" at the Flamingo Hilton at \$14.50 dinner minimum and \$6.95 midnight with cocktails and "Fire and Ice," gliding along smoothly at the Hacienda. The latter is another Jerry Jackson conception with dinner show from \$13.95, but you can order cocktails-only at that early show for \$9.95, same fee at midnight.

Rocky Sennes' "Wild World of Burlesque" at Holiday Inn Center Strip, is neither wild, worldly, nor burlesky. But it is sparkly contempo vaudeville with the wonderful Walker family and ventriloquist Jay Nemeth with his assertive pooch, Nicky, which is perhaps the longest running act in town, vastly entertaining showgoers for more than 25 years from the inimitable Hank Henry gems at the Silver Slipper, Castaways, and Hacienda to every edition of "WWOB." The show is one of the outstanding bargains at \$6.95 and there's rarely an empty seat in the capacious Mark Twain Theatre.

#### Back to Those Headliners...

There are more Las Vegas resorts presenting headliners than production shows, contrary to the blather about the many conversions. Consistent, except for the closing of the hotel after the tragic November 1980 fire, the MGM Grand, with no less than the hotel president choosing the talent for the Celebrity Room, has maintained the best track record. Bernie Rothkopf, practically raised in the green felt jungle, bid high and handsomely for talent in 1973 when the Grand opened with Dean Martin and has been paying worthy entertainers' paychecks ever since. Although topstars move around from hotel to hotel more freely than in the early years when they were pacted jealously

to one venue, MGM Grand maintains the best stable. And loyal. Consider Liberace, Mac Davis, Barbara Mandrell, Engelbert Humperdinck, Rich Little, the Oak Ridge Boys, Lynda Carter, Eddie Rabbitt, Donna Summer, Melissa Manchester, Julio Iglesias, and, naturally, old faithful Dino.

At one time Caesars Palace held the big chips in topstars. Earlier this year Caesars opened the musical, "42nd Street." That percentage deal with producer David Merrick was ostensibly booked to run from May to December, but the show exited in mid-August. The high cover charge of \$35 during opening weeks with drinks extra helped to slow traffic into the Circus Maximus Room, and later dropping the minimum to \$25 plus drinks wasn't much of a help. "42nd Street" simply wasn't a Vegas vehicle. It was a costly venture for everyone, including the public.

Caesars' topstars had to scatter for other jobs while entertainment chief Tom Willer put together a new show plan relying upon the 9,000-seat outdoor arena. "Concerts Under the Stars" started out at \$25 top, but later reduced to \$12.50, spotted Merle Haggard, Kenny Rogers, the Beach Boys, Chicago, George Benson, Kenny Loggins, and Johnny Cash double billing with Glen Campbell, the last pair playing in early October.

Barry Manilow brought Caesars back to glory days and nights after "42nd Street," followed by Rodney Dangerfield and his stretched 35-minute act with nervous sweats, with Tony Bennett and Wayne Newton to follow. Caesars' roster for the balance of 1983 includes Tony Orlando and Bernadette Peters, Diana Ross, Paul Anka and Susan Anton, and, to be sure, four Wayne Newtons and Joan Rivers with her cohorts, the Smothers Brothers and Jim Stafford.

When she signed the contract with CP

president Harry Wald, Rivers gushed, "I'm ecstatic about playing Caesars. Edgar [her husband] has always loved the mirrors over their beds. I hope they put him with somebody affectionate."

Meanwhile, Frank Sinatra (\$400,000 a week) was grabbed by the Golden Nugget's board chairman Steve Wynn for intimate high-roller shows at the Atlantic City store as well as the posh new convention and showroom complex being completed in Las Vegas. He also took another of CP's \$400,000 babies, Diana Ross, to Atlantic City, and there are hints that Kenny Rogers will be joining those gilt-edged entertainers in both of Wynn's uppercrust gaming paradisos.

Another expert entertainment booker, with an even longer reputation than MGM's Rothkopf, is Ed Torres. At the Riviera, he brought on many a topstar from lounges or semi-entity positions in the showbiz world. After buying the Aladdin with co-owner Wayne Newton, who left later in high dudgeon, Torres was imperturbable through it all. When they were co-owners, Torres had allowed Newton some weeks in the showroom along with other name headliners, but then saw the light.

He brought in "C'est Magnifique," a revue which proved not too magnifique in pulling substantial audience counts, spinning Newton off to Caesars Palace. Torres finally returned to headliners who could be bought at lower fees, or would work percentages, sometimes called "two-walling," or play fewer shows a week. Paul Anka (his way is moving around from hotel to hotel, no easy target), Sammy Davis Jr., and Bill Cosby are Torres' topstars with Neil Sedaka and John Davidson on the roster.

Actually, Torres has his heart not in the Aladdin, but in his El Rancho down-Strip, revised from the Silverbird over a year ago.

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This is a contrived country-western joynt, emulating the decor of the fabulously successful Sam's Town on the Boulder Highway. The El Rancho sports no main showroom, but does offer budget restaurant menus and entertainment in the lively Red River lounge.

#### Dolly & Diana

The entertainment scene was an up-and-down affair last year at the Riviera, the hotel owned by Mishulam Riklis, who blithely escalated topstar salaries with Dolly Parton's infamous \$350,000 a week back when \$250,000 was the maximum gentlemen's agreement in town. He also paid Diana Ross the same amount, but she pulled her weight; Dolly couldn't even finish out her week. That \$350,000 was a bargaining chip to keep Ross at the Riviera, but Caesars upped the kitty another \$50,000, and back she traipsed to the plastic Greco-Roman empire up-Strip. Another one of Riklis' ventures was to build a \$50 million Superstar Arena Theatre, an oversized convention complex. The only superstar who played in the space was Kenny Rogers. Riklis also placed his wife, Pia Zadora, in headliner status at the Riviera before making her a movie star.

Recalling how successful Joan Rivers and David Brenner worked together in an all-comedy combo, Riviera bookers had Rivers linked with the Smothers Brothers and Jim Stafford for packed rooms and rattling good casino action. Thus a trend was started with more offbeat combinations of Riviera linkage this summer—Brenner with Paul Revere & The Raiders, Village People with Rip Taylor, and a funny sleeper combining Debbie Reynolds with Phyllis Diller and Red Buttons. Amid the experiments and innovations are Riviera regulars Shirley MacLaine, Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers with floaters Paul Anka, Tony Orlando, Neil Sedaka, Bobby Vinton, and David Brenner. This November and December the Riviera features MacLaine, Sedaka, the Gatlins, Ronnie Milsap, and Roger Miller.

Sahara and Hacienda owner Paul Lowden, onetime organ accompanist for Ann-Margret and bandleader at the Flamingo (and a card-carrying Musicians Union Las Vegas Local 369 member), books entertainment at the Sahara and Hacienda with musical director Ron Andrews and Bernie Yuman. Trying to get the Sahara's entertainment act together has been a tough chore, and without Don Rickles, left over from the sale of the hotel from Del Webb, there would be no base. Lowden pays six figures a week on the Rickles contract through next year, but he doesn't mind it much because of the revenue the insult comedian raises when he fills the Congo Room. In and around Rickles, there are and will be various four-wall deals, where the star or star's representatives lease the showroom and negotiate percentages for the income. George Carlin, in particular, is one excellent four-waller for Lowden.

The Lowden team's experimental bookings this past summer included short runs for K.C. & The Sunshine Band, Kool & The Gang, Captain & Tennille, Tex Beneke & Orchestra with Connie Haines, Johnny



While entertainment directors experiment with hot new production shows, stars like Diana Ross are never left out in the cold, as indicated by her new showroom contract.

## In Vegas Thou Shalt . . .

The following are several positive points of advice on Las Vegas show-going. Memorize them, use them, and you will have the time of your life.

**BRING MONEY.** It may not buy happiness elsewhere, but in Las Vegas money is the key to ecstasy and losing it is the supreme joy. Merely losing one's shirt or blouse is everyday ordinary; you can do that back home. Besides, such apparel tossed on a craps, blackjack, baccarat table, or even stuffed into the coin receptacle of a slot machine, may only be acceptable downtown at the Horseshoe Club, where Benny Binion and sons Jack and Ted will bet on anything.

**TALK LOUD.** Las Vegas is the place to boast and brag about how much money you lost, how many shows you have seen, all about your superior status back home, and how many credit cards you carry.

**OVEREAT.** With all of the cheap buffets and gourmet restaurants in the hotels, take advantage of the newly-found comestible nirvana and pile it on. Shop the breakfasts from 49 cents to \$1.89 day and night. They're the best bargains, and you can fill your belly easily for \$5 a day. That's living. Warning: don't take in the gourmet joints unless you know the meaning of *pate de foi gras*, which definitely is not baked marijuana.

**FOLLOW YOUR NOSE.** Amble aimlessly up and down the Strip or back and forth on Glitter Gulch, and when you've gawked at enough signs and billions of lights, stroll out on the desert. Lie down and contemplate your navel, or look up and see where Sally

Ride rode. Take some sunscreen and a beach chair and watch the lights on the interstate from afar. Or pretend it's a field trip and look for sidewinders, scorpions, tarantulas, horned toads, and lizards. Who says you have to gamble to have fun in Las Vegas?

**CHATTER DURING SHOWS.** Every performer desires help with his/her act and you can be part of showbiz when you jabber. If you are asked "where-you-from," pick three places only—Texas, Chicago or Central America. Most comedians who ask that question don't know that Chicago IS Central America.

**THROW YOUR WEIGHT AROUND.** This is known as *juice* in these parts. Even if you lost juice over the years, don't let on. Conventioneers are good at juicing, so if you want to pick up pointers, follow one of those birds around. Women have another style of juicing. They throw their weight not only around but also at you if you attempt usurpation of their bank or section of slot machines. So beware. The best show of juice, however, is ringsiding, and that's where you can't tell where juice leaves off and duking the maitre d' begins.

**GET HELP FROM ON HIGH.** Las Vegas resorts and gambling dens were built on proceeds from donations by the general public. When making those donations it is necessary to play games where parting of you and your money is sour sorrow. At this point, turn to prayer. Of course it won't do you any good. Despite what George Burns says, God ain't playing Vegas anymore.—BW

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Desmond, comedian Jackie Vernon, Roy Orbison, and the main man, Rickles, repeating an earlier hot pairing with Debbie Reynolds.

### From 'Albatross' to 'The Best'

The Desert Inn's president, Burton Cohen, assumed control of entertainment three years ago, initially booking the dubious French revue, "Alcazar," subsequently dubbed by critics "Albatross" or "Alcazraz." He made up for that goof by signing "A Chorus Line," which he brought back again after a run of "Annie." The walloper, "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," was a continuing smash, let go far too soon for "Sophisticated Ladies," another winner. The price, \$15, was right, too. Presently "Dream Street" is running indefinitely.

Debacle of the Sands earlier this year extended into a hit-or-miss entertainment policy with mixtures of four-walling, two-walling and other oddball pactings. The Sands is a Summa Corporation hotel again after the Pratt brothers from Texas put a ton of money into the resort and subsequently fell on their pratts. Under Summa's corporative presence (which makes felt the Desert Inn, Frontier, Silver Slipper Casino, Castaways, and Reno's Harolds Club), all entertainment now in the Copa Room is in the hands of the resort's marketing manager, Robert Vannucci.

In that venerable showroom, ruined by the Pratts when they redesigned the earlier Copa Room, which was one of the finest saloon intimeries in Las Vegas for years and scene of the riotous nights of Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack, midnames are now booked or lease the premises. The Kingston Trio, Fifth Dimension, Four Freshmen, Helen Reddy, and Lovelace Watkins were summer runs at the Sands, with prices from \$13 to \$16 minimum per person depending on the performer.

Always good for laughs are producer-director Maynard Sloate's musical revivals or sex comedies at the Union Plaza downtown. Prices are reasonable, always, no matter the production, at \$9.95 dinner show and \$5.95 late show. For example, the summer run found busty June Wilkinson disporting her anatomical features in the farcical "What the Butler Saw," which also starred Britisher Bernard Fox and an all-Equity cast. The musical "Sugar," derived from the movie "Some Like It Hot," opened in September for at least a three-month caper.

### Jazz, Rock, & Redd Foxx

A couple of blocks east, the Four Queens is bidding for something different in entertainment: Alan Grant's Monday Night Jazz in the French Quarter lounge. For a cup of shrimp or a drink, the best jazzmen in the world blow beautiful ideas. There are names like Red Norvo, Charlie Byrd, Lew Tabackin, Don Menza, Vince Falcone, Carl Fontana, Charlie Rouse, Benny Golson, Joe Henderson, Herb Ellis, Bud Shank and Shorty Rogers. The Four Queens has tossed down the gauntlet to its neighbor, the Golden Nugget, heading for upper eminence by bringing in high rollers. This fall, the regular lounge fare for high or low rollers, day and

night except Mondays, included the Ink Spots, Sylvia Sims, Imperials, Limelinters, and debut of Mickey Rooney's wife, Jan Rooney.

Nostalgia buffs have choices in famous musical groups of the '50s and '60s at the Marina. Following the Music of Jan & Dean, the Coasters sailed through October, and the Treniers will make November a frolic at no cover charge, but there is a two-drink minimum tab. Also, you can revel in "Legends in Concert" at the Imperial Palace with Jonathan Von Brana as Elvis Presley and Sherry Rae as Janis Joplin, both outstanding, and others for \$9.95 with surrounding and often suffocating lasers and multimedia effects. In the afternoons, Mickey Finn cavorts in wacky musical and visual schtick for \$8.95.

Sam and Bill Boyd, father and son, who own Sam's Town on the Boulder Highway, are going alfresco in October with C&W and rock 'n' roll concerts in a 6,000-seat parking-lot arena. For \$12 to \$14 on Friday and Saturday nights through November 5, you can see such venerables as Chuck Berry, Johnny Rivers, Rick Nelson, and that great bluegrass, Ray Charles.

Two-beat fanciers congregate at the Barbary Coast afternoons for Chuck Diamond's Royal Dixie Jazz Band flashbacking for no cover or minimum. Nights in the Barbary Coast feature those Emerald Isle ambassadors, the Irish Show Band starring Brendan Bowyer. This popular fixture has all the professional Irishers stomping or weeping for no minimum charge.

It doesn't cost a penny for gawkers to perambulate around the two midway floors of Circus Circus and watch thrilling aerial performers and circus acts jump through hoops, ride minibikes, and contort themselves. This is one of the best must-see Strip magnetizers filled with low-cost buffets to opulent gourmet rooms.

There is always the mixed bag of entertainment. If you opt for boys to be girls, sashay to Kenny Kerr's hilarious "Boylesque" at the Silver Slipper for only \$5.95, or upstairs at the Slipper for the same price, a rootin' tootin' western minirevue called "Branded." Both are winners. At Bob Stupak's Vegas World more boys revert to girls in "Outrageous Vegas," starring the Miss-Fits for a \$4.95 ticket. "Lavendar Follies" is another boy-girl impressionistic romp at the Fremont at \$8.95. And for a combination of sophisticated satire layered onto cornball fun, the Maxim presents Bobby (The Almost X-Rated) Duck & The Shameless Hussies, those hussies having the marvelous humor of Suzanne Buhner and additional gags by Frank Link all for \$6.95.

The XXX-rated material still spews from the cauldron mind of Redd Foxx, who in no way or fashion resembles mild Sanford of the video sitcom series. He's at the Hacienda alternating with "Fire & Ice" for \$14.95, adults only. One of the amusing concomitants of Redd's act is being a voyeur, watching faces of those innocents in the audience and counting the number of walkouts of shocked unbelievers. Which goes to prove that people are funnier than sex & X.

## It doesn't cost a penny for gawkers to perambulate around the two midway floors of Circus Circus.

It may be summed up by Cork Proctor, a very bright, assaultive comedian, Las Vegas, Nevadan, who values old jokes peppered within fast ad libs, oblique routines, and "where-you-froms." Proctor, who should knock, cocks an eyebrow as he observes, "Everybody comes to Vegas to get completely insane.

"There's the stock joke about the guy and his wife wandering through the casinos for days and days, and had seen about 68

shows. Finally the wife says, 'Let's go to the room.' The guy moans, 'Who's playing there?'" □

Bill Willard, who claims he came to Las Vegas in the third wave of wagon trains, is bureau chief for Variety in Las Vegas and entertainment critic-columnist for the Las Vegas Review-Journal amid other personal satisfactions of acting and sculpting, which may or may not be lucrative.



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# Confessions of an Undercover Waiter

Any idiot can work in a showroom. Right? Wrong!

By Howard Rosenberg

Several years ago, shortly after becoming entertainment critic for KTVN-TV in Reno, I went to see Roger Miller at the Circus Room (now the Celebrity Room) in John Ascuaga's Nugget. The evening was shattered by sound so loud that it could have chipped concrete, and the next night, as part of my review, I took the Nugget's technician to task for allowing the sound to get so far out of hand.

At the time I felt my criticism was fair. I later learned that the only ineptness was my own in not knowing what I was talking about.

The Nugget's sound technician, Lonnie McKinney, offered to explain the problems in balancing sound in such a room, especially when the performer elects to bypass the house system almost completely, as Roger Miller did. I had had the idea that if the sound were too loud, you just turned the volume knob down. Any idiot could do that. Right? Wrong!

It was then that I became curious about just what makes a showroom run seven days a week, two shows a night. Consider how ignorant most of us are about what it takes to seat and serve hundreds of people, each eating appetizer, salad, entree, desert, mints, and glasses of who knows how many different beverages. And to do it quickly, efficiently, with a ready smile, an agile mind—all in approximately two hours.

I've watched audiences for 10 years now in all the Reno-Tahoe showrooms, and I know that the manner in which you are greeted and shown to a table, and the quality of the service and the food, definitely affect the way you respond to a show. The worst performances can, somehow, be less disappointing if you are well settled by courteous captains, waiters, and waitresses. In turn the best show can be abysmal if your treatment has been shoddy. I wanted to know how it all worked and, foolishly, thought I could find out by watching. No way! I discovered there was only one way to learn. I had to get a showroom job.

I went to see Cor van der Stokker, maitre d' of the Circus Room, to ask if he'd have me in his room. To his credit, he never flinched; he just opened his eyes wide and asked what I'd like to do. I told him I thought I could handle the duties of a busboy, whereupon his assistant, Mike Suarez, said, "No way! You'd never be able to lift a fully-loaded bus tray." He was right, and also, I later discovered, he was horrified that,

though I might lift one, I might drop it squarely on a patron.

I was paralyzed at the thought of actually serving people, which left only the job of captain—and put expressions of pure terror on both Cor's and Mike's faces. Captain Brian O'Toole saved an awkward impasse by suggesting that I become a "waiter-trainee" and volunteered to supervise my training.

On a Thursday evening I reported for duty in white shirt, brown bow tie, brown slacks, and well-polished brown shoes. I was issued my busboy manual and a gray jacket, given the first orientation session, and assigned to trail an experienced team.

I spent most of the night just trying to stay out of everyone's way. I wanted to help—after all, I'd watched busboys for years—but I could clear only one place at a time, and then I'd manage to drop most of the silverware. At first glance, providing ground pepper for salads seemed hardly a challenge. Wanna bet? The pepper mills routinely required me to grind and grind—until suddenly three pounds unloaded at once in a black cloud. Then there was the "wheel," the marvelous little assembly containing butter, sour cream, and creamed horseradish. An idiot ought to be able to manage that. Right? Wrong! The squares of butter clung to one another with the tenacity of barnacles to a pier; the sour

**There's no waiting with this waiter.**



cream at times was as sticky as wallpaper paste; and the horseradish was like Elmer's Glue one moment, milk the next.

My colleagues told me all of the ghastly things that can happen with the wheel, but I knew they were just pulling my leg—until one woman I was attending asked for a speck of horseradish. Despite being warned that the wheel's safest place was in front of the customer, I was still being chic, holding it behind and spooning condiments up and over, when a large dollop of horseradish landed direct center on her bosom. My first impulse was to yodel for a captain, but they were all busy. So I gently plucked the offending blob and deposited it on the lady's side plate. The poor woman met my actions with astonished silence and, mercifully, then exploded with laughter when I explained that had I run for a damp cloth, the horseradish might have stained her dress. How's that for a wonderfully understanding customer? I was ready for a nervous breakdown then and there.

After the first show I thought surely someone would say, "O.K., Rosenberg, enough is definitely enough!" Instead I was told to get an orange jacket for the cocktail show. I was promoted!

In the kitchen a young dishwasher walked over to me and, in a voice tinged with awe, said, "Wow, you just started at dinner as a busboy and you got promoted already?" No amount of explanation made any difference; trading a gray jacket for an orange one meant you had been promoted. Finally I told him that's how things happen at the Nugget, how hard work is rewarded and anything is possible. Impressed, he asked, "Are you gonna get a tux tomorrow?"

If I had thought the dinner show was difficult, the cocktail show drill turned out to be infinitely more complex. Not only was there an endless variety of cocktail possibilities, but there were also requests for wines and beers about which I knew absolutely nothing. By this time I was exhausted and petrified that someone would penetrate my thin veneer of acquired capability. When a member of my third party asked me to recommend a good wine, on a mad impulse I said, "We have an excellent vintage Ripple." The customer, obviously convinced I was an idiot, ordered a very expensive bottle of wine and explained why he declined my suggestion. He and his friends were also very helpful in opening the bottle when I kept trying to unscrew the cap.

*You haven't experienced patience until a cook the size of a linebacker explains to you over the steam table that you must call for your prime ribs and then shut up until he asks, "How?"*

I survived that first evening on nerve alone, but by Friday I was learning. Saturday was exceptionally rough. The room, which had been filled to the seams, was now packed to the rafters, and my partners gave me three of my very own tables. I decided that Thelma and Chuck were definitely harboring a death wish, but we were on the "racetrack," as we professionals call that section of the room, and I managed it with the help of our busboy, Mike, who saved me with frequent advice such as: "Tables 561 and 571 are on their last lettuce leaves and there'll be a mob in the kitchen, so you get in there now and pick up their entrees, and as soon as I see you come through the door, I'll clear away the salad plates and you can serve both tables at once."

The kitchen was even more difficult for me to learn. A showroom's kitchen runs on rigorous routine and discipline. There is a particular way in which orders must be called, and strictly-followed procedures assure that the food is prepared properly and served in the manner, and with the

grace, that the showroom demands.

You can't really say you've experienced patience until a line cook the size of a linebacker explains to you over the steam table that you must call for your prime ribs and then shut up until he asks, "How?" so that he will cut the part of the roast that you need. Or when one of the other cooks explain that if you don't tell them "Ordering" or "Pickup," they can't read minds!

Then there are the checkers, who are responsible for seeing that each item leaving the kitchen is charged to the correct bill and that no one is overcharged or underserved. The rule is, "Never run in the showroom," and while one must be careful in the kitchen, time can be made up here, although never at the expense of the patron or the house. More than once I felt a hand grip my belt and heard Betty, a checker, say sweetly, "The check doesn't leave the kitchen yet, dear, and aren't you missing a potato and plate cover for that plate?" Or, "Has someone ordered just a baked potato and asparagus? No meat?" And I wasn't the only one who got a lending hand. Everyone

helps everyone else, from waiters and waitresses helping those at the rail garnish their plates, to someone running for a tray jack to rest a heavily laden tray upon, to captains appearing from nowhere to help just when you're sure that you are so snowed under you'll never get the mess untangled.

Thelma and Chuck and Tony and Marge trained me, passing me on to Gilberto and Jeanne and Wilma and Fernando. The master busman, Isabel, who watched me like a hawk, saved me from disaster more times than I care to remember. Then there were Betty, Cathy, and Linda, who rescued me from 18-inch wine corks and 10-inch corkscrews. And the late Marty Paul, the long-legged beauty who was the Nugget photographer, would wave to me during her rounds and made it a point to sashay by, flashing a wicked grin, and crack, "Drop any horseradish tonight, you little devil?" Lonnie McKinney, the Nugget soundman, would ask when I wanted to hang from the light booth and see what life was like up there. There was six-foot-five Dennis, a waiter and former student who always seemed to be in back of me to hoist my five-foot-six inch frame up the extra couple of inches so I could skewer my dinner order on the six-foot-nine spindle.

By Sunday I was a veteran, even beginning to feel a little like I actually belonged. After all, I'd managed all of the deuces (that's tables for two for you civilians) in the horseshoe without once



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having to be rescued. I was even carrying six dinners on a tray, way up over my head, and remembering who got what as soon as I'd grasped the importance of the battle plan—serve counterclockwise, just as you write the check.

Was I recognized? Oh, yes! And it was fun being recognized until people wanted to hold onto me while I was trying to get things done. Red Skelton's face when he spotted me in my waiter's jacket will stay with me forever, as will Nugget General Manager Pete Carr's reaction as I passed his table that first evening. I had gone by several times pretending I didn't see him and hoping he wouldn't spot me. He knew I looked familiar and couldn't place my mug until a lady at the next table asked for my autograph, whereupon he did a 180-degree turn that threatened both whiplash and cardiac arrest.

What did six days of two shows nightly teach me? I learned that I could handle my share of the work, and toward the end of my week even manage to help someone else out. I learned the true meaning of the words "bone weary!"

I also learned that though most people are pleasant, kind, and considerate, there are those few who deserve a swift kick and should never be let out in public unless supervised by a mature adult. I learned that women are infinitely more demanding to deal with than men. I learned how difficult it is to provide good service to sour people, some of whom have yet to learn the words "please" and "thank you" or who think that because one is paying for service, such words are unnecessary. I learned how difficult it is to keep one's temper with rude patrons and, conversely, what a joy it is to dance attendance on those who attempt to meet you at least part way. I learned what a difference a smile can make.

Did I enjoy it? What other idiot you know would get up each morning in order to get to school by eight, teach a two-hour class, answer phone messages and the mail, spend the afternoon visiting student teachers in four Reno-area schools, reach home in time to shower, shave, and dress for the mad dash to the studio to deliver that evening's review, and then rush to the Nugget by five o'clock (Captain O'Toole's training sessions began promptly at five), serve dinner, fold napkins while waiting for the dinner show to end, collect checks, set up for the cocktail show, serve cocktails, collect checks after the show, clean up, and break for home at half past two, and then "sleep fast" so he could begin all over again?

Did I enjoy it? I have three college degrees tucked away somewhere, but my Award of Merit from the Nugget's showroom staff hangs proudly on my office wall. The inscription reads, "Graduate with Honors, For Service Beyond the Call of Duty." I even moved an autographed picture of Ginger Rogers to make room for it. □

Howard Rosenberg is a professor of art at University of Nevada, Reno, and KTVN-TV's movie and entertainment critic.

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# PETTICOAT PROSPECTORS

A woman in Nevada's gold camps had to work harder than men, and also had to prove she could sting like a rattler if the occasion demanded.

By Terri Sprenger-Farley

**T**ales of the Comstock Lode—the camaraderie, hard work, adventure and sudden wealth—filled the fantasies of many children in the late 1800s, and the images appealed as much to young girls as to their brothers. And more than a handful of those girls, grown up, leapt at the chance to strike it rich in Nevada's mining boom at the turn of the century—no matter the cost.

Trading tea dresses and milky complexions for trousers and skin like mule hide was the first part of the exchange. A lady prospector also had to work harder and longer than her fellows. She paid higher wages to those who deigned to help her in spite of her sex. And she toted a pistol in her waistband to show she was no tenderfoot and could sting like a rattler if the occasion demanded.

Luckily, Lillian Malcom was no tenderfoot when she arrived in the Bullfrog mining district in 1905. Bullfrog was at its most primitive stage. Miners' homes were dugouts or tents, huts made of mud and manure blocks, or flour barrel frames covered with rough feed sacking. Prospectors in this rude town were eager for diversion. When Lillian, pretty and fresh from the Klondike, told her stories in boarding houses (which were usually tents)

for the price of a beefsteak (which cost as much as a man could mine in a month), even the most skeptical allowed that this little lady might make it.

Lillian had lived in a world of snow, dog sleds, and gold for several years. But the adventure which drove her to Nevada had been a spring snowshoe trek of 175 miles from Kugarrock to Nome in Alaska.

"The ice was treacherous and the snow was melting," Lillian told listeners who sat on bedrolls or in the dirt. "The rivers were breaking up and we had to jump from one cake of ice to another. Once I fell in and nearly drowned.

"The party ran out of grub, and if it hadn't been for the tomakius—a sort of white pheasant—we would have starved."

Miners weren't the only ones enthralled by Lillian's stories. Her looks and lively tongue made her an instant "character," and the newspapers loved her.

When Lillian announced that she and a couple of old timers were going to cross Death Valley looking for richer diggings, a crowd gathered in front of the Merchant Hotel to see her off, and the *Tonopah Bonanza* applauded her bravery in undertaking a trip "not always made without loss of life, even by strong, robust manhood.

"She did not betray any apprehension—

on the contrary, she was smiling and happy and told reporters Death Valley had no terrors for her," the *Bonanza* marveled.

Then, because she was, after all, Bullfrog's leading lady, the newspaper described Lillian's "prospecting trousseau."

"Her hair was braided and tied in numerous labor-saving knots with white baby ribbons. Her face was pretty, but certain to lose its feminine delicacy and whiteness ere the sun's rays of Death Valley get through with it, especially as her light-colored felt hat was narrow-brimmed."

Onlookers who appeared to be watching her four stamping horses might well have been considering her skirt length, which, the *Bonanza* reported, was quite a bit shorter than usual. It wasn't indecent, though, since it "made a safe junction" with her tan boot tops.

Lillian said she had a pair of men's khakis in her saddlebags which she would don once she "got out a ways." Certainly it's only speculation that this remark enticed reporter Anthony MacCauley to accompany the prospecting troupe on its perilous journey.

While Lillian had to search for rich ground in California, two of her sister miners made themselves rich right in Goldfield. Mrs. Jennie Enright and Mrs. George

H. Lewis were partners. They had bought their claim from another woman, Bessie Miller, who, according to the *Goldfield Daily Sun*, "parted with her holdings for a tidy sum." Jennie and Mrs. George didn't mind laying down the sum, for they were still flushed with success from a \$50,000 profit they'd made on another claim.

Their final transaction did involve a perilous journey, but it was more frightening for a San Francisco investor than for the veterans of Goldfield's petticoat brigade. L.R. Keough had come to see to his company's interests. When he left with the two ladies on a Saturday afternoon in August, intending to visit claims a few miles from town, he expected a pleasant outing. But the day grew dark and torrential rains destroyed their trail markers on the lake bed. It wasn't until 10 o'clock that night that Jennie, driving the skittish horses, spotted a landmark. They gathered ore samples and headed the team back toward Goldfield, where they arrived at 2 a.m. soaked and chilled.

"Mr. Keough was considerably impressed with the courage of the women of the mining camps," the *Sun* bragged, "as well as their ability as horsewomen."

Keough was impressed enough that he set the women up with enough money to pursue their wildest prospecting dreams. The new Goldfield Gold Lake Mining Company brought Jennie and Mrs. George \$5,000 in cash and 4,500 stock shares.

**A** dead man's map led Helen Cottrell to her fortune. She originally had come to the Manhattan area to prospect, but things went sour, so Helen turned to the relatively safe and lucrative task of selling supplies to the miners she envied. But her dreams resurfaced when an exhausted prospector told her he was giving up.

His brother had mined in the wilds of the Toiyabe Range before suddenly leaving for Mexico, where he had been killed by Yaqui Indians. Before his death he had drawn a detailed map of his claim and mailed it home. But, the prospector sighed, it hadn't led to any silver or even to the cabin his brother had described. He laughed at Helen's excitement and told her she was welcome to the useless scrap.

Helen's elation was contagious. She recruited two partners, and after a long search they found an old stone cabin and a forge with silver bits on it. The ore-rich ledge was harder to find, and the men with her almost gave up. Helen never did, although, she told reporters later, the place was so difficult to reach "a few more trips would have bankrupted me for clothing destroyed."

Helen's New Era Mine proved to contain gold and lead as well as silver. Unlike many Manhattan miners, she didn't sell out to San Francisco speculators who had invested heavily in the area, and that was just as well. Her discovery took place about the same time as the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Bay Area investors pulled their money from Manhattan and put it into rebuilding San Francisco, leaving Manhattan's mines in the doldrums.

Helen's independent streak, typical of

the petticoat prospectors, led her to even greater wealth on the Comstock. Not content to sit on her porch and watch ore cars roll to the smelter, Helen supervised some work she had commissioned in Gold Hill. She supervised very closely, and in 1907, clinging to the side of a 20-foot shaft, she recognized the little black threads of tellurium her workers had missed and withdrew an immediate \$1,600 in gold.

Few women miners were as lucky at nabbing partners as Helen Cottrell. Their sex and independence were an unappealing combination to male adventurers of the time, so some women resorted to subterfuge to get desperately needed assistance.

The *Reno Evening Gazette* in 1908 reported one such attempt by an unnamed "hard-working woman" who had given up her attempts at recruiting local men. She skirted the issue of gender by hiring two miners through the mail.

Upon facing his lady boss, the experienced miner quit. But the other man smiled at the irony of his surprise. During their correspondence, he'd alluded to ore field experience he didn't have. He was a rank tenderfoot, as entranced with the lure of the rush as his employer. The two stuck together and surprised everyone by stumbling on a claim of gold-infused rock worth \$4,000 per ton.

Happy Days Diminy was one of the hardest-working, longest-lived of the pioneering women. "No delicate, publicity-seeking effeminate imitation, but the genuine article," the *Goldfield Daily Tribune* called her. She was led to her first strike by a ghost.

Although her "sunny disposition, unchanged good nature and smiling optimism" earned her the nickname, Happy Days preferred to work alone. She had been doing so for five years when, in the summer of 1912, some folks said the solitude had scrambled her brain.

A dead woman friend appeared to Happy Days, flitting about her land, snatching gold nuggets. Then a dream man materialized, explaining that the nuggets could be found there—he pointed—a mere 1,000 feet from her cabin.

He was right. After many years of working the ground and hauling timber with only two burros for partners, Happy Days came to Goldfield with a bottle in her handbag. The bottle held a small collection of gold nuggets.

The sparseness of the discovery didn't seem to faze her. Like many of her female associates, Happy Days seemed to love the dream of wealth and the prospecting life as much as the gold itself.

The Goldfield that Happy Days knew was a town of contrasts. Inside the raucous saloons and dancehalls, New York speculators in fine suits shared bar space with grizzled miners in sweat-stained khakis. Outside, the streets were jammed with businessmen from Chicago in their new Stanley cars, veering to miss braying, knee-locked burros.

Goldfield had all the romantic excitement of the storied Comstock, and Happy Days swore she wouldn't miss it for the world. So, when she couldn't get San

Francisco backing for her operation or even help from her husband, who had returned briefly from his own pursuits in Alaska, she pressed on alone.

She found a platinum deposit and bought herself a fruit ranch in California, and, for the first time, hired a young male helper to take a shovel to the 80-foot shaft she'd planned.

The young man, known as Smith, did his work well by all accounts. And if some folks made snide guesses about his true service to Happy Days, their speculation came to an end seven months into his employment.

"Woman Fighter Sends Man to Hospital," the *Tonopah Bonanza* blared. "Happy Days Called 'Some Scrapper.'" The newspaper reported Sheriff Ingalls had heard that Happy Days and Smith were engaged in a "rough and tumble scrap," which needed a lawman's intervention. But before he arrived, a man named Collitt had stepped in and helped the damsel in distress to "put the finishing touches" on Smith. Severe cuts, abrasions, and a broken arm sent Smith to the hospital, but Happy Days, whose injuries were comparable, balked at such treatment. As soon as she was placed on bond, she went home.

Physical injuries were just part of the territory. Unless they entailed copious amounts of blood, female miners were inclined to shrug them off.

A year before the fight, Happy Days had received a concussion when her two burros, unused to harness, upset her wagon and ran over her. After dusting herself off, she was undoubtedly made an honorary member of Goldfield's "Tip-Over Club," which required being thrown from a car—a common occurrence in the early 1900s.

One of Happy Days' contemporaries fell down a 30-foot mine shaft and refused to leave her Goldfield cabin. Maggie Johnson, a black miner, was finally hospitalized over her protests because of crippling rheumatism. Elderly and ill, Maggie had been unable to work her claim for years but had lived on its earlier bounty, refusing to lease or sell her mine.

Happy Days was luckier. The *Ely Daily Times* reported that she was still going strong in 1942 at age 91. She was, in fact, demanding a divorce from her third husband, 70-year-old H. Jester. Perhaps the marriage just couldn't stand the strain of Happy Days' spirit. Still seeking support for her mining efforts, Happy Days had ridden freight trains to New York to snare Wall Street backing. Her efforts had been futile, but she was undaunted.

Happy Days ended her life as many of her sister miners had prayed to end their own. She continued to live in the stone cabin she'd built by hand, continued to cultivate a garden each spring. And, hale and hardy in her jeans and jacket, Happy Days kept her prospector's dream alive long after it was a memory for the rest of Nevada, treading the path to Ely from her Tule Canyon claim, with a little bottle in her handbag, filled with flakes of gold. □

*Terri Sprenger-Farley of Verdi is a freelance writer and regular Nevada contributor.*

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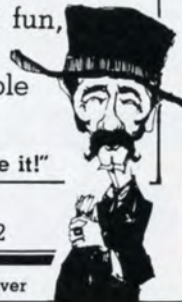


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## LETTERS (Continued from page 7)

such fine articles that have met me with interest and delight include "Louis L'Amour on the Lode," "Reuel Gridley and His Incredible Sack of Flour," and "Butch Cassidy & the Great Winnemucca Bank Robbery." I love your photographic presentations that appear in Muench's Gallery— send him to California; we can use excellent photographers like him.

Jeffrey Benziger  
Waterford, CA.

*Benziger, Muench does live in California. It's obvious he likes Nevada.—Ed.*

### Errata

I am afraid that I have sullied the good reputation of your fine Nevada calendars by an error I take full responsibility for. Many people will notice the stately Douglass home featured in November 1984, and try to figure out where it is located in Reno. The truth of the matter is that no matter how hard you look for the home, you will only find it if you take the short drive to Fallon. You will find it sitting on the corner of Williams and Carson streets, where it has been since it was constructed in 1904.

I hope this satisfies those folks who spend a lot of their time trying to find mistakes it just wasn't your fault! The quality of the magazine, your Christmas promotions, and the calendar are first rate, something every Nevada resident can be proud of.

Sharon Edaburn Taylor  
Director/Curator  
Churchill County Museum & Archive  
Fallon, NV

### Huh?

May I respectfully ask that you publicize many of the more beautiful aspects of Nevada rather than all the gambling and drinking sides? Many of us love Nevada for its scenic beauty and spiritual things we do have in it, also its schools.

Josephine T. Frugoli  
Sparks, NV.

### Group Therapy

A friend of mine shares his subscription with me, and after thoroughly enjoying each issue, I pass it on to my daughter. We all enjoy it.

A. Gantert  
Reno, NV

My husband and I visited the USA two years ago and spent three enjoyable months in your lovely State of Nevada, based with my sister in Boulder City. We receive each issue of your excellent magazine, which helps to keep alive happy memories of many of the places we visited and of the friendliness of the people of Nevada. We also enjoy your readers' letters from all parts of the USA, and in this connexion thought you would appreciate receiving a letter from your English readers. We are now eagerly looking forward to our next visit to Nevada in 1984: to quote our car sticker, "We love Nevada"

Kathy & Reg Jenkins  
Churchdown, England

(Continued on page 83)

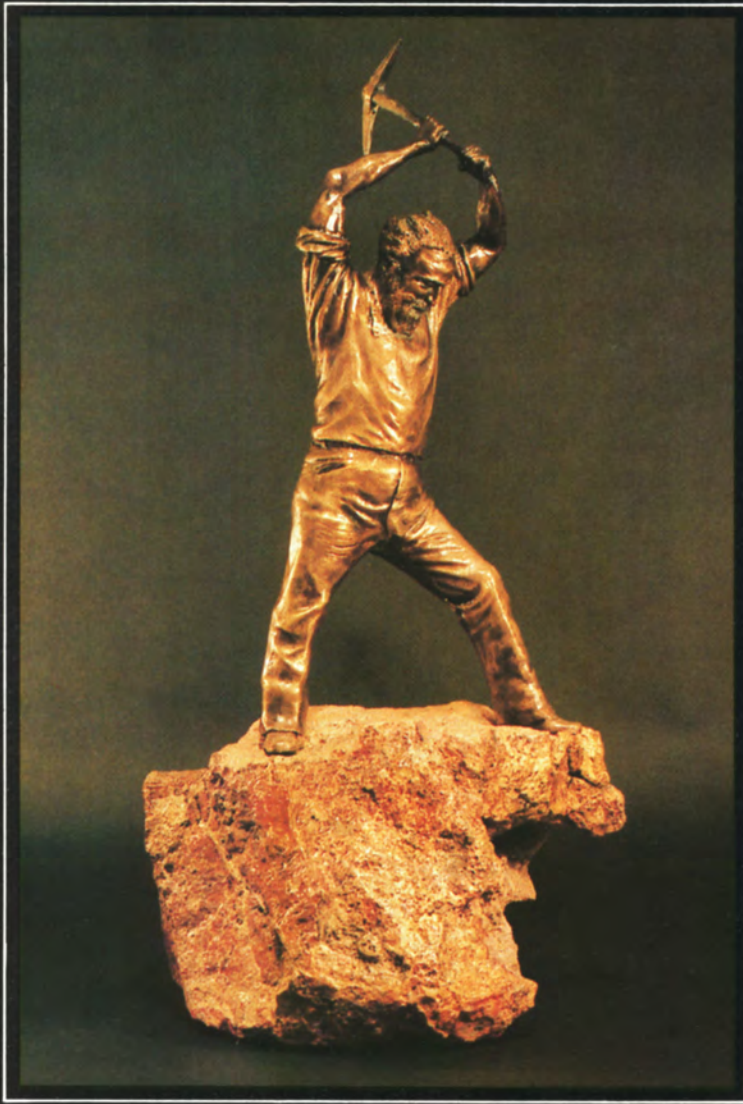


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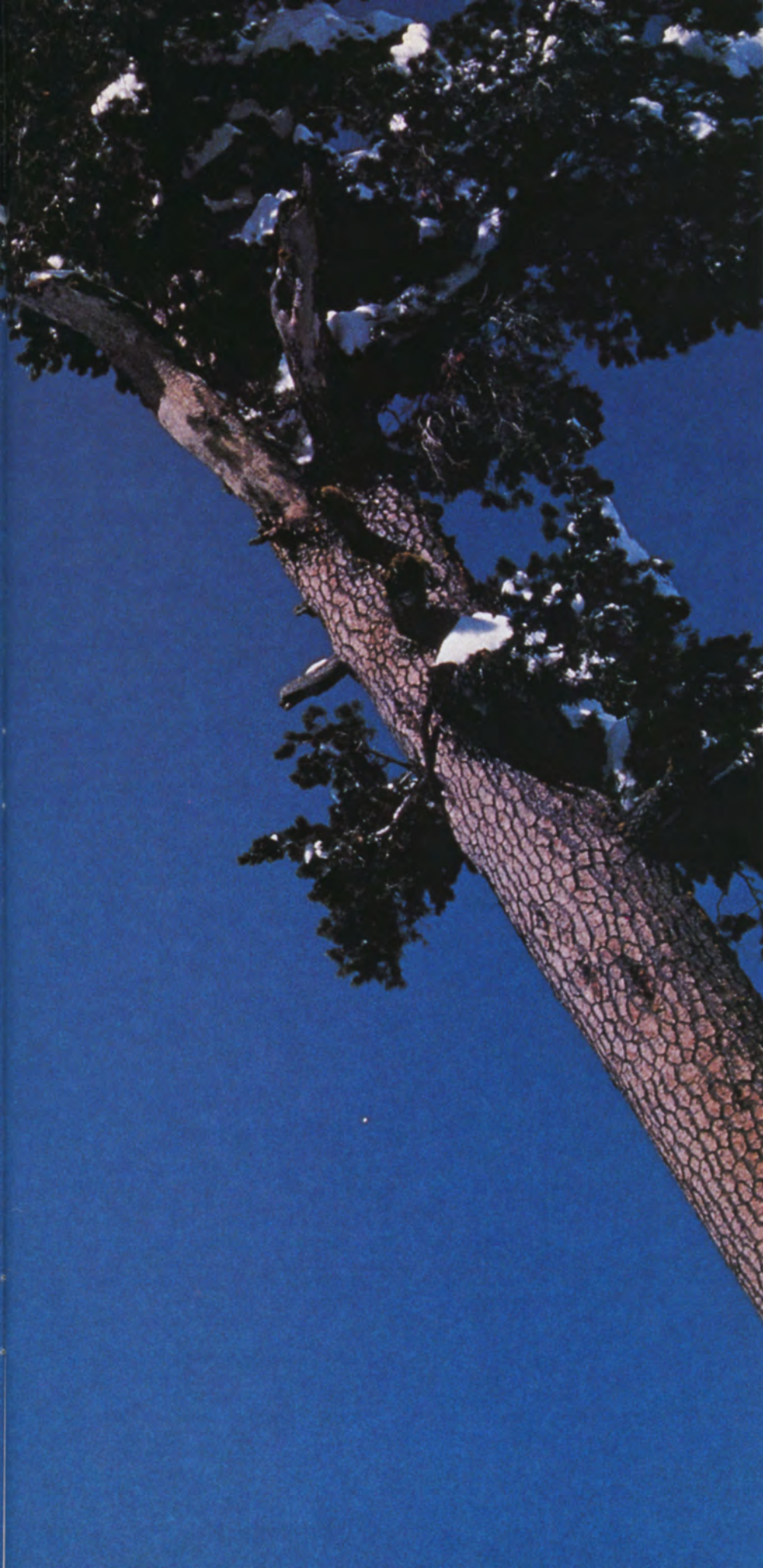
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LARRY PROSOR

When winter approaches, those special, unforgettable days on the slopes leap to mind like a good ski movie.  
**By Buddy Frank**

---

# Sierra Skier's Fever

**F**or some people, it's the changing of the leaves. Others sense it in the crispness of the air, or the approach of the holiday season. But for skiers, winter's harbinger is the arrival of the ski movies. In countless auditoriums, school gyms, and VFW halls, the ski season begins with the latest film from Warren Miller or Dick Barrymore.

I hadn't thought much about this annual rite until last fall, when I took a non-skiing friend along to see "Ski the Wild Side," a Warren Miller movie, at the Pioneer Theater in Reno. Since it was a warm November night, my friend found it remarkable that everyone in the audience was dressed in wool sweaters and goose-down parkas, even inside the



There are 162 lifts at Tahoe-area resorts. From their chair on this frozen morning, a pair of skiers greet a perfect day of sun and powder.

MICHAEL J. NEVINS

*'One of skiing's strange appeals is that there's a risk factor you don't get with golf or canasta.'*

what I liked so much about the sport of sliding down the mountains in Nevada and California. I told him about three of my special days:

**DAY 1:** I had no business on a steep trail like Gold Run at Slide Mountain. Actually, I had no business on any slope with more than three degrees of incline. In those early days, my technique consisted of a snowplow turn and a method of stopping based on whatever I hit first. By the time I noticed the first "Experts Only" sign that day, it was too late. Down was the only way I could go.

One of skiing's strange appeals is that there's a certain risk factor you don't get with golf or canasta. I discovered that on my way down Gold Run. There's no use dwelling on the horror I felt while careening through the moguls. But I'll never forget my feeling at the bottom. I was cold and tired. My buttocks had done more sliding than the bottom of my skis, but *I had done it.*

Surely it was the same emotion Jim Whitaker felt when he became the first person to scale Mount Everest. It's a moment that every skier knows: taking that one step beyond common sense that is called reckless if you fail, daring if you succeed.

**DAY 2:** It was cloudy and cold that morning, and skiing was not a high priority. There was a light drizzle of snow mixed with rain that dampened even the bright colors of my red and yellow parka. But it was Saturday, and my friends had driven all the way from Walnut Creek to ski Squaw Valley. We cursed the fact that the weather would essentially ruin our day in the mountains and deflate the value of the \$20 lift tickets.

Many others in the lodge had written off the day and were packing for home. It was their quitting that prompted us onto the Squaw No. 1 lift. Skiers often do things just because someone else won't. Jumping from a high ledge or being the first to attack a steep chute earns a personal merit badge and establishes your place in the local pecking order. Going out in a blizzard is one way to earn points, especially when someone else says it's too miserable to ski. You usually freeze, but later it's worth a good story and a free drink in the bar.

crowded theater. I laughed self-consciously and pulled off my knit cap.

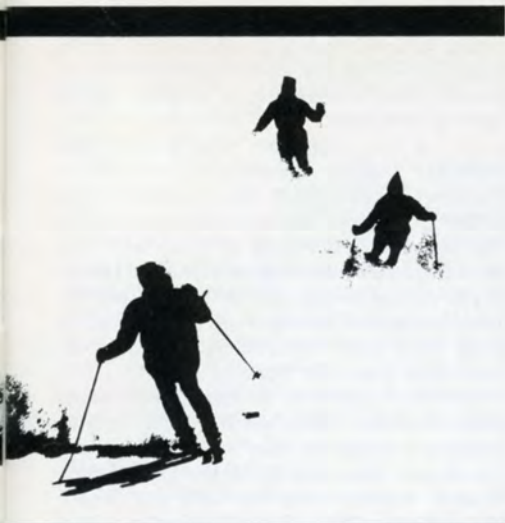
When the lights dimmed, and a hotdogger came blasting through a three-foot drift of new powder snow (that's how all ski movies start), two-thirds of the audience began screaming. Not just ohhhs and ahhs; it was the sort of yelling you hear at a burlesque show when the dancer finally throws her pasties to the guy in the back row.

My friend thought the balcony had collapsed or someone had sweated to death inside a powder-pants outfit. But, looking around, he noticed that he was the only person whose eyes were not riveted to the screen. On the way out, he remarked that the movie had no plot, no script, no characters, and no end to the shots of guys

doing forward flips off the edge of cliffs. Yet, the crowd had given the feature a standing ovation.

What he didn't understand was that this November hysteria is a normal skier's condition, brought on by the long, mandatory summer recess. At this time of year skiers tend to forget the bad times and amplify those special days into unforgettable moments. The frustrations of long lift lines or frozen fingers never make it into the memory bank. Instead, images of Sierra symphonies played on powder snow with slalom skis dance in their heads. It's such remembrances that may prompt a skier in August to get his old skis a rush hot-wax job just in case the snow falls early.

After the movie, my friend asked me



As we rode up the lift, the weather got worse. At 6,800 feet, a dense fog obscured even the chairs in front of us. Visibility soon dropped to five feet, and the drizzle turned to sharp ice crystals that cut into our cheeks. By 7,200 feet, the only distinguishable object was the inside lens of my own goggles.

Then something happened. The gray-black sky began to lighten, turning slowly into a blinding white. Suddenly, we shot out of the clouds into a sky of deep blue, like an airliner bursting free of a cloud bank. The storm below us formed a floor with only a dozen peaks sticking above the billowy carpet. To the left, the chairlift of KT-22 seemed to rise out of nowhere, headed to the mountain top. One could imagine Saint Peter checking tickets at the top.

It was the most beautiful scene I have ever witnessed. In contrast to the gloom in the valley, here the air sparkled. Snow crystals hung in the still sky, glittering with the reflected sunlight against an intense blue backdrop. As the storm had descended into the valleys, it left behind a powdery blanket of snow tailor-made for skiing.

It was after lunch before word got back to the main lodge that a miracle was taking place above 8,000 feet. By then, most of the timid skiers were heading back to Marin or Modesto. It had been a special day for those of us willing to bet against a sure thing.

**DAY 3:** If you really want to see what skiing is like, try doing it blind. Two winters ago, I spent a day with a group of sightless skiers at Kirkwood Meadows. I served as one of their guides, but it was they who led me to see skiing in a new way.

I have always treasured the sport as a visual bonanza, from those panoramas above Squaw to the spectacular stunts of a freestyler twisting off a jump. In fact, I have often pitied those non-skiers who were unable to view the world from atop a cornice.

With that prejudice, I began my day with the dozen blind skiers. To me, the entire event seemed cruel; what could skiing offer to people unable to see around them?

The answer had quite an effect on me. As you might expect, to learn to become a guide for a blind skier, you must first



TOM LIPPERT

**Skiing on fresh snow is something to smile about whether you're working on your snowplow or new ballet moves. For resorts' ability ratings, see chart.**

understand his or her needs. To do that, you put on a blindfold.

Stumbling through the lodge was terrifying. Despite a companion's assurances, I constantly feared I would trip, bang into a locker, or smash my head on an overhang. My walk shortened, and each step became a probe instead of a stride. While it was my vision that was directly removed, it was my mobility that disappeared. The thought of skiing in this condition was incomprehensible.

But once on the slope, with a short period of adjustment, I felt a tremendous sense of freedom. I began to trust my legs to relax and to feel the slope, to sense, and then absorb, the ruts and bumps. It's a skill that my instructors and coaches had

preached for years, but one I never really appreciated until that day.

The wind in my face was marvelous. I couldn't see, but I could *feel* skiing. I felt the crisp mountain air rushing by my cheeks, I felt the speed in my feet, and I felt the joy of being freed from the constraints of pedestrians.

As a group of us were led down the mountain by a guide, a young blind man let out a scream that would have been perfect at the Pioneer Theater. So did I. □

*Buddy Frank of Reno is public relations director of Sage Computer Technology. He plans to be at the Pioneer on November 16 for the first sure sign of winter—a Warren Miller ski movie.*

# Ski Country Strategy

An expert tells how to use Reno as a vacation base to beat the crowds, save money, and spend more time skiing.

By Don 'Snoshu' Thompson

What's just about every skier's biggest problem? Apres-ski costs. Lodging, food, and entertainment. What's the answer? Ski Reno.

Reno's potential as a ski capital may be under-publicized, but it's supported by pure logic. Nowhere else in the ski world—Vail, Sun Valley, Aspen—can you find so many challenging ski resorts so close to a resort mecca that is, in fact, in its "off" season. That means bargain prices on rooms, meals, and car rentals, not to mention some of the finest entertainment on earth.

What's more, the skier who chooses Reno as a ski base gains a new perspective on ski-vacation alternatives. Instead of being trapped at one resort, you can plan adventures up and down the Sierra. All you need is a car—yours or a discounted rental—to carry you along I-80 or U.S. 395 to the slopes of your choice. But there are more reasons to choose Reno as your headquarters. Just check these facts:

Reno is on Pacific time. You gain an hour flying in from the Rockies, and there's no time lost by driving or flying in from the

West Coast.

The Reno airport is in Reno, just minutes from hotels and motels and only 23 miles from the closest Sierra ski resorts.

Reno is at 4,500 feet as opposed to Tahoe's 6,200 feet and has milder winter weather. Also, you spend less time acclimating. But, if you come from sea level, remember to drink more water because of the lower humidity and less alcohol because one drink does the job of two at those elevations.

With access to 21 Sierra ski resorts, which vary in elevation and access, you won't get hopelessly snowed under. If a storm hits Squaw Valley, you might find Mount Rose and Heavenly are clear and sunny. But if it's awful all over, you couldn't find yourself in a place with more sidetrips to offer.

And nighttime? Casinos entice you with bargains like \$5.95 prime rib dinners and low-cost shows galore.

## Getting Set for the Slopes

Such advantages may be obvious to the trained eye, but it's a shame they're often

overlooked. They are also essential to developing your ski strategy in Reno and Tahoe, especially if you're concerned about cost, evening fun, and getting in as much skiing time as possible.

As a ski strategist, you might first consider lodging. Weekends are busy in Reno even in winter, but weekdays are wide-open. Make advance reservations for the first and last nights of your stay, and then negotiate other nights or stay at Tahoe. If you decide to stay over at the lake, ask the hotel or motel manager in Reno to store your extra gear, remembering to take an overnight bag with you.

Shuttle buses plan to run from Reno to some ski areas. Although rides may cost as much as a rental car, they offer congeniality. For shuttle information, call the Reno-Tahoe Visitor Center, 702-348-7788, or Reno-Tahoe Tours, 702-322-6343. If you're with a group, a rental car or van may be best. It's off-season for rental agencies, too, so try for unlimited mileage or at least some mileage in the daily rate. Many agencies will make a deal for a week's rental. Request snow tires and also chains, which you might need for heavy storms and major passes.

Dining in the Reno area can be both a pleasure and a bargain. Breakfast is served all day and night in most casinos, and under-\$2 specials are plentiful. But don't eat a big meal just before skiing; it tends to slow your reactions. A good, solid breakfast an hour before skiing can last you all day, saving money and valuable skiing time.

You can buy lunch at any of the ski areas' day lodges, but most are crowded weekends, limited in offerings, and expensive. Brown bagging is popular and permitted. One variation: carry lunch in a fanny pack or knapsack and picnic on the slopes. Or

## 1983-84 Nevada Skier's Guide to High Sierra Resorts

Area	Phone	Top Elevation	Vertical	Rating Bg-Int-Adv	Day Lift Price* Adult/Child	1/2-Day Lift Price* Adult/Child	Day Rental* Adult/Child	1/2-Day Rental* Adult/Child	Lifts	Location
Alpine Meadows	916-583-4232	8,637	1,800	25-40-35	\$22/\$11	\$14/\$8	\$14.50/\$10.50	\$10.50/\$7.50	13	Calif. 89
Boreal	916-426-3666	7,800	600	20-60-20	\$14/\$8	\$10/\$7	\$12.50/\$9	\$9/\$7	9	I-80
Deer Park	916-583-7236	7,050	850	20-30-50	\$15/\$5	\$8/\$5	\$12/\$8	n/a	4	Calif. 89
Donner Ski Ranch	916-426-3578	7,835	800	25-50-25	\$15/\$9	\$9/\$7	\$10/\$8	n/a	4	I-80, Norden
Echo Summit	916-659-7154	7,950	550	40-40-20	\$12.75/\$9	\$10/\$8	\$13/\$9	\$9/\$7	3	U.S. 50, via SLT
Granlibakken	916-583-4242	6,600	280	50-50-0	\$8/\$5	\$5/\$3	\$12/\$7	n/a	2	Tahoe City
Heavenly	916-541-1330	10,100	3,600	25-50-25	\$22/\$12	\$14/\$12	\$12/\$9	n/a	26	S. Lake Tahoe
Homewood**	916-525-7256	7,990	1,650	20-50-30	\$15/\$10/\$5**	\$11/\$7/\$3**	\$10/\$9	\$7/\$6.50	9	Calif. 89
Kirkwood	209-258-6000	9,800	2,000	25-50-25	\$20/\$10	\$14/\$7	\$15/\$9	n/a	8	Calif. 88
Mt. Rose	702-849-0704	9,700	1,440	30-40-30	\$16/\$8	\$10/\$5	\$13/\$9	n/a	4	Nev. 431
Northstar	916-562-1010	8,600	2,200	25-50-25	\$21/\$10	\$14/\$7	\$14/\$9	\$9/\$5	11	Calif. 267
Sierra Ski Ranch	916-659-7475	8,852	2,212	25-55-20	\$16/\$11	\$11/\$8	\$12	\$9	9	U.S. 50, via SLT
Ski Incline	702-832-1177	7,600	900	20-40-40	\$18/\$12	\$12/\$9	\$13/\$9	\$9/\$6	7	Incline Village
Slide Mountain	702-849-0303	9,700	1,450	30-30-40	\$14/\$7	\$10/\$7	\$10/\$7	\$7/\$5	6	Nev. 431
Soda Springs	916-426-3666	7,350	650	30-50-20	\$10/\$7	\$8/\$6	\$12.50/\$9	\$9/\$7	3	I-80, Norden
Squaw Valley	916-583-6985	8,900	2,700	30-40-30	\$22/\$5	\$13/\$5	\$12/\$8	\$8/\$5	27	Calif. 89
Sugar Bowl	916-426-3651	8,383	1,500	20-30-50	\$20/\$12	n/a	\$12.50/\$8.50	n/a	9	I-80, Norden
Tahoe Donner	916-587-6046	7,350	600	50-50-0	\$12/\$8	\$8/\$6	\$12.50/\$10	\$10/\$8	3	Truckee
Tahoe Ski Bowl	916-525-5224	7,800	1,630	40-40-20	\$14/\$9	\$10/\$6	\$10/\$7.50	\$6	5	Calif. 89

### MT. CHARLESTON

Lee Canyon	702-872-5462	9,430/8,510	1,000	15-80-5	\$14/\$9	\$9/\$5	\$10/\$10	n/a	3	Nev. 156
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\*All prices are subject to change.

\*\*Middle prices are for juniors, ages 11-16.

†Night skiing only at Boreal and Sugar Bowl

skip lunch, leave early, and catch a dinner show.

Dinner can be the best meal of the day, from economical buffets (the answer for starving teenagers) to flambe and candlelight at a gourmet eatery.

Then, if a blizzard hits the higher elevations, you can stow away the skis for the day and visit attractions like Harrah's Auto Collection, the Fleischmann Planetarium, the State Museum in Carson City, the Minden-Gardnerville farmbelt, or the pioneer towns of Genoa and Virginia City. You can play indoor tennis at MGM. Reno and Sparks golf courses are open virtually all year, so even if it's snowing in the hills, you may be able to play a round while planning your next day on the slopes.

### The Cluster Strategy

After living in Reno for more than 38 years and skiing the Sierra for 36, I've noticed that Tahoe's ski areas tend to fall into six groups, or clusters, in which each resort shares a part of the same snow-capped mountain with two or three others. Each cluster offers a wide spectrum of challenges and prices. Take Cluster 1 at Donner Summit, for example. Boreal Ridge has night skiing. Soda Springs, open only on weekends and holidays, is less crowded, inexpensive, and a great place for beginners. And Sugar Bowl has goggle-fogging expert runs.

Remember, Saturday is the busiest day at Tahoe ski areas. If you can't get to a big resort by 8:30 a.m., try one of the smaller ones, such as Tahoe Donner, Donner Ski Ranch, Soda Springs, Homewood, Tahoe Ski Bowl, Echo Summit, or Deer Park. Each is less crowded and has lower ticket prices on weekends.

Sundays are a bit different. The morn-



High rides include Heavenly's tram, which reaches 8,250 feet.

ings start slower since almost everyone has partied Saturday night. The crowds leave early to get a head start home. You can sleep in, have a fizz breakfast, and ski half a day. Or, get on the slopes by 9 a.m., and you'll still be ahead of the "red eyes." Then ski late as the crowds dwindle after lunch.

You can use the following ski clusters to form your own battle plan:

**Cluster 1, Donner Summit:** On Interstate 80, go west up the 7,239-foot summit to Boreal, a 45-minute drive from Reno, off the Castle Peak/Boreal Ridge exit. Good beginner and intermediate runs, great night skiing, good grooming and snow-making, and a day lodge with bar.

Soda Springs operates weekends and holidays only (see page 30 for exceptions). Take the Soda Springs/Norden exit, then drive up Old Highway 40 about three miles. Long beginner and intermediate runs, day lodge, fewer crowds on weekends. Sugar Bowl is 10 minutes further up the road, with all levels of terrain, an access gondola, large parking garage, and European dining room. Established in 1938, Sugar Bowl is one of the oldest ski resorts in the West. Donner Ski Ranch is five minutes past Sugar Bowl and has a rustic lodge, few crowds, good intermediate and some advanced runs.

**Cluster 2, Truckee/North Tahoe:** Historic, picturesque Truckee is at the apex of five resorts in this cluster and well worth an apres-ski visit. For Northstar-at-Tahoe, go west on I-80 from Reno, take first Truckee exit and left at first stop sign in Truckee. Northstar just opened the "backside" of its mountain and has a modern village and day lodges, condos, and hotel. Ego-building

## A Skier's Marathon and Cluster Muster

The plan here is to ski each Tahoe cluster in a single week. Pack two ski outfits, one for warm and one for cold weather, driving clothes, and a nice apres-ski outfit. Remember your skis, too. Take a deep breath, and then:

**Saturday:** Arrive in Reno in morning. Rent motel room and see if you can store stuff there when gone overnight. Get rental car or drive your own to Ski Incline, Slide or Mount Rose in Cluster 4. Ski half-day and return to Reno.

**Sunday:** Sleep in, have brunch, leave 11 a.m. to Cluster 1. Ski half-day at Sugar Bowl, night ski Boreal, dinner and night in Truckee.

**Monday:** Ski Northstar in Cluster 2. Dinner there or Squaw. Night ski at Squaw.

**Tuesday:** Ski Squaw or Alpine, dinner and night in Tahoe City.

**Wednesday:** Ski Homewood or Tahoe Ski Bowl in Cluster 3. Dinner and night in Crystal Bay or Incline.

**Thursday:** Ski Heavenly in Cluster 4. Dinner and night at South Shore.

**Friday:** Ski Kirkwood, dinner in Gardnerville/Minden, hot bath at Wally's Hot Springs, back to Reno for show.

**Saturday:** If you're still standing, get a half day at Slide Mountain or Mount Rose.—DT

beginner and intermediate runs, plus some challenges. Next, on I-80, go a mile past the first Truckee exit to the Squaw Valley/North Tahoe exit and turn right, then left at Safeway, and follow signs to Tahoe Donner. It's economical, well groomed for beginner and intermediate, and uncrowded.

From the interstate, Squaw Valley is 20 minutes down California 89 along the Truckee River. Squaw is busy on weekends, but with 27 lifts there is lots of room. Hotel, condos, dining, shopping village, day lodges. At the base of Squaw is Any Mountain, a beginner and Nordic area with a children's ski program and day care.

Alpine Meadows is 10 minutes past Squaw on California 89. Thirteen lifts on two mountains, all levels of terrain, nice day lodge. At the turnoff to Alpine is Deer Park, a good beginner-intermediate area.

**Cluster 3, Tahoe City/West Shore:** Tahoe City, which has many motels, restaurants, and shops, is near three ski resorts. Five minutes south is Granlibakken, a small, fun area for warming up. Tahoe Ski Bowl and Homewood, 15 minutes down the road, will surprise you. From the road you see only the lower, steep slopes; above are gentle runs with great views of the lake. Sometimes the two resorts combine lift tickets, as they share the same hill. Homewood has a day lodge at base and snack bar mid-mountain. Tahoe Ski Bowl has a day lodge at base and good intermediate runs. These areas are less crowded than most other resorts on weekends.

**Cluster 4, Mount Rose Highway:** Going south from Reno on U.S. 395 and Nevada

(Continued on page 34)



# The Right Schuss

By Jim Crandall

In skiing's pioneer days, it was a one-run situation. Skiers would strap their primitive skis to their backs, hike all morning up a snow-clad peak, and collapse in exhaustion at the top. Then they'd rest, eat, hog-tie their boards to their boots, and plummet in suicidal spirals down the mountain. If they survived, they might try it again—next year.

Then someone invented the ski lift, and skiing has gone downhill ever since.

Now, skiers jet to resorts, ride padded triple chairs, ski on tortion-tested fiberglass, and dawdle on summits that would make eagles swoon. And, we haven't seen the end of it. Ski resorts are constantly offering the latest in offbeat enticements to get you on their mountain. Following is a mixture of some hot new innovations, cold facts, and old time treasures of the Sierra ski slopes.

## A Chair-Raising Experience

Does the thought of perching on a chair that dangles from a spindly steel cable keep you grounded to the bunny hill? Here's the chance to banish your fears of flight forever. Northstar features a learner's chair lift. No massive engines, no death-defying dashes to board, no 40-foot drops. This chair rolls gently with gravity, has loading and unloading ramps, and, most importantly, is only three feet off the ground.

## Rent Your Own Hill

Now you can rent an entire ski area for yourself and friends. Soda Springs, owned by Boreal, is up for grabs on weekdays (Soda's open to the public on weekends). You can choose from a smorgasbord of prices and a menu that includes three chair lifts, rental shop, day lodge, instructors, ski patrol, lift operators (mandatory), and even ticket checkers, in all or part. The area can accommodate up to 2,000 skiers, and its managers hope to entice large groups and corporations with company outings.

## Catching a Free Ride

Perhaps the toughest, most grueling runs of the day are to and from the ski area's parking lot. That's why Squaw, Alpine Meadows, Deer Park, Echo Summit, Northstar, Sierra Ski Ranch, Incline, Tahoe Ski Bowl, Lee Canyon, and others offer free shuttle-bus rides. Some go from the parking lot to the ticket office; some run long distance pickups to motels and designated stops around Tahoe. For shuttle info, call ahead, and leave the driving to them.

## Clocking Christies

Your skis are slick as silicone, the edges sharp as sabers. As you level your gaze down the slalom track, your heart quickens and adrenaline gushes. You adjust your

From high chairs to on-mogul computers, Tahoe resorts offer the latest in ski fads and fantasies.

goggles, strangle your ski poles, and expertly insert a 50-cent token into the on-hill computer. Jean-Claude Killy stand back.

Breaking the timing gate, you carve your way through the gates to the finish line and another machine delivers a computer read-out of your race time. That is, if you're skiing at Boreal, which just installed the first public coin-operated, computer-monitored racecourse in the Tahoe area.

## High Chairs

If you can pry your eyes from the ski bunnies or French ski instructors long enough, you'll discover some breath-catching alpine panoramas from many Tahoe resorts. Any view of Lake Tahoe is stunning, but if you really want to choke for air, ride the high chairs at Mount Rose and Slide Mountain, or the Sky Chair at Heavenly.

The Mount Rose view is to the east, with Reno and the clear vistas of the Great Basin reaching out to other galaxies. A short hike from the top of Heavenly's Sky Chair affords a 360-degree panorama from 10,000 feet, with the cattle ranches of the Carson Valley to the east, Tahoe to the west, and the jagged spires of the Sierra parading to foreign lands north and south.

The upper mountain vistas are also spectacular at Squaw, but the most thrilling is from the tram that dangles 600 feet from earth as it bobs its way up and over the top of Rockpile Peak. Don't look down.

## Nightlife on the Slopes

You ski to the lift shack, slip into a chair, and are whisked off into the still, quiet darkness of a high-Sierra night. Above, stars and planets hang like polished diamonds from an unseen chandelier. Below, moguls shimmer as skiers float down a floodlit run. The night skiing at Boreal and Sugar Bowl is infinitely delightful.

## Trivia for the Lift Line

Heavenly, with 20 square miles of skiing terrain, is America's largest ski resort. Homewood's lodge is the closest (400 feet) to Tahoe's shores. Soda Springs is the oldest in the Sierra, founded in 1931. Sugar Bowl has never allowed automobiles into the area since it was founded in 1938. A gondola (new this year) carries skiers the mile from the parking lot to the base lodge. When it opened, Sugar Bowl also offered the first chairlift in the western hemisphere, a single chair that carried lone skiers to the top of Mount Disney, named after one of the resort's original investors, a cartoonist by trade.

## Hot Lines & Cold Facts

Ski resorts, motels, and hotel-casinos in Tahoe and Reno are constantly coming up with discount ski deals and special pack-

ages, especially for mid-week skiers. There are several numbers you can call for ski conditions and current bargains. For Incline, call Ski Lake Tahoe, 702-831-4222. For the Reno-Tahoe connection, call the Reno-Tahoe Visitors Center, 702-348-7788. For North Tahoe resorts, call the Tahoe North Visitors Bureau, 916-583-3494. And for Heavenly, Kirkwood, Echo, and Sierra Ski Ranch, call the South Lake Tahoe Visitors Bureau, 916-544-5057.

*Jim Crandall, Nevada associate editor, once cruised the moguls at Heavenly as a national ski patrolman.*

## Downhill in the Desert

The ski resorts of Northern Nevada are world famous, but it surprises many people that, in the sunny south, winter skiers are carving up moguls just an hour's drive from Las Vegas.

The downhill action takes place at Lee Canyon Ski Area, tucked among the pines on 11,912-foot Mount Charleston. Lee Canyon, a day-time ski area 44 miles northwest of Las Vegas by U.S. 95 and Nevada 156, continues to grow as the city does. Last season more than 70,000 downhillers purchased lift tickets, and members of the Ken Highfield family, who own and operate the resort, believe they'll top that figure this year.

With the installation of a new chairlift last summer, there are now three double chairs serving beginner, intermediate, and expert slopes. The beginners' area, Mighty Mite, has been expanded to four times its previous size to accommodate more novice skiers. Since starting his ski school at Lee Canyon in the 1960s, Swiss-born instructor Marcel Burel has coaxed thousands of beginners through their first wobbly turns. His Teutonic demeanor and Swiss accent lend an unexpected Alpine tone to the area's gaming motif, by which runs are named High Roller, Blackjack, Keno, and Slot Alley.

For the first time this season there will be a Lee Canyon sales and rental annex in Las Vegas. The shop, located at 2395 Rancho Road, will sell lift tickets and rent ski equipment and clothing.

The shop also will rent car-top ski racks and chains. Highway Patrol warnings that chains are essential for travel on Mount Charleston during foul weather have often gone unheeded. When the temperature is a balmy 70 degrees in Las Vegas, it's hard to imagine icy roads just 40 minutes away.

Lee Canyon also offers cross-country ski touring with rentals, lessons, and trails. The nearby Foxtail Snowplay Area is popular with sleds and tubers. There are good snowmobile runs at Macks Canyon. For many people, it's fun to just hike in the snowy woods, enjoying a traditional winter's day.

After all, what better way to enjoy winter than to drive away from it at day's end?

—Ardis Coffman





# The Culver Express



Incline's Kirsten Culver is indisputably the fastest woman on skis.  
**By Robert Frohlich**

Camel cigarettes, which has sponsored world speed skiing almost single-handedly for the past three years, uses the phrase "Where A Man Belongs" in its advertisements. But after last spring's speed skiing championships in Colorado, Camel may want to come up with a more progressive slogan.

"I'd say there are 20 to 25 women speed skiers in the world," says Kirsten Culver, the 22-year-old racer from Incline Village. "And of the eight women at the Silverton championship, each ended up skiing over 112 miles per hour."

True, the men dominated as Franz Weber of Austria broke his own record with an amazing 129.303 mph. But the women were fast, too, especially Culver.

She had placed second as a rookie at Silverton in 1982, zooming through the speed trap at nearly 106 mph. Then last April she broke the women's world record on her last run, punching out a time of 120.785 mph to beat the previous mark by 9 mph. She collected the first-place prize of \$3,000 and a bonus from her sponsor, Atomic, the ski maker. She demonstrated that women speed skiers can compete closely with the men.

In the process, the Incline High School graduate established herself as the fastest woman on skis.

Culver set her remarkable record after less than two years in speed skiing, a daring and relatively young sport that is truly beyond the pale. If downhill skiing can be compared to Grand Prix auto racing, speed skiing is like Big Daddy Don Garlits flat out in a rocket-fuel dragster.

Speed skiers' equipment and clothes are suitably high-tech. Competitors race on long, 240-centimeter skis and wear skin-tight, aerodynamically-designed suits (some with styrofoam fins called fairings on the backs of the legs to direct wind flow) and close-encounter-type helmets that make the racer resemble a cross between a guided missile and a hard-boiled egg.

Flying down the steep runway, it takes heartbreaking effort to maintain a tuck en route to the 100-meter-long speed trap. The body may be severely rattled at high speeds, and G-forces try to pull the racer back to the tails of the skis. As a result, balance, reflexes, a deft touch, strength, and, most of all, cool self-possession are needed because the racer has to perform flawlessly and be oblivious to the dangers inherent in runs that can reach way over 100 mph.

For more than two decades the Tahoe Basin has been known as home of some of the world's fastest men on skis: one-time world-record holder Dick Dorworth; Paul Bushman, who placed second overall in '83 at 126.810 mph; and Steve McKinney, whose innovations and leadership have made him sort of the Muhammad Ali of speed skiing. It is thus fitting that Tahoe is the home of Kirsten Culver.

"When I first showed an interest to speed ski, some of my friends thought that I was crazy," she says offhandedly. "But most gave me a lot of support. They're not the type who want to see women at home cooking and vacuuming. When I first began,

most of the guys were really anxious to give me hints. After I placed second in the finals my first season, I noticed less and less advice coming my way. I think some of their male ego was hurt because now I hardly receive any at all."

Culver has a narrow, soft face and

## Downhill Racers

Because of famous record holders like Steve McKinney of Squaw Valley and fresh faces like Incline's Kirsten Culver, speed skiing is picking up momentum in the States. Much of the credit goes to International Speed Skiing, Inc., which is run by attorney Steve Mollath from an office in the Security Bank Building in downtown Reno. Mollath, executive director of the four-year-old organization, was a member of the UNR ski team in the 1960s and is a longtime friend of McKinney and other racers.

This winter Mollath and his assistant, Heather Dolan, are scheduling 10 races in the Camel Sprint Series, hopefully including some at Tahoe. The sprint series involves "recreational" speed skiing, in which racers may reach speeds of 50 to 70 mph, and clinics that stress safety and technique. The group has scheduled this spring's \$20,000 Camel North American Speed Skiing Championship for April 23-29 at Arapahoe Basin, Colorado. ISS also circulates regular newsletters and a glossy annual magazine to 400 speed skiers around the world, about a third of whom live in the Tahoe area. For information on events, you can call ISS in Reno at 702-786-3023.

Tahoe's Culver, ready to race in '84.



LARRY PROSOR PHOTOS

sparkling eyes, and there is a bit of restlessness about her, as if one isn't sure if she has just come in or is about to go out. She has a healthy tan, and though it's difficult to spot the muscle in her at first, it's muscle strong enough to hold a tuck down a course as steep as an elevator shaft. She has a strong sense of balance and moves the way a wise cat goes through a cracked door. Still, it's difficult to picture such a friendly and pretty girl shooting down those steep runways.

One fan who appreciates Culver's success is her mother, Beverly Culver, who has a bookkeeping business in Incline. "She's done wonderfully, overcoming so many things like poor equipment and sponsorship in the past," says Beverly, who saw her daughter set the record in Colorado. "Kirsten has always done things like hang gliding, rock climbing, and skateboarding. Speed skiing was just one more part in the process."

Kirsten herself says, "I like speed skiing because I've always liked to go fast. It's a thrill I can't get anywhere else."

"Speed skiing is more a mental thing than anything else," she says. "I don't think about falling. I just concentrate on doing it, on having the best run I can. Anyway, I almost died in a car crash this winter on my way to the trials at Arapahoe Basin. My back was tweaked and I couldn't raise my hands up for the race. There are lots of other dangerous sports and many other ways to get hurt aside from speed skiing."

Culver, who graduated from Incline High School in 1979, began skiing at age 10 when her family moved to Tahoe. She raced three years on her high school team, training mostly at Ski Incline under coach Lance Romick. Always having competed in the slalom and giant slalom, she didn't begin practicing the downhill until after graduation.

"I spent a year on Incline's Far West Team. Hans Pretschner was my coach, but I couldn't afford to be on a team or enter races every weekend. I turned to downhill as a result. I could get away without a lot of coaching and afford the events because there were fewer downhill races," she says.

"It was also easy for me to pick up. More guts were involved than finesse. I hadn't started skiing and running gates as early as the others, and I could make up for that in the downhill."

By the end of her first year, she was ranked seventh in the Far West and received an invitation to a National Team race camp. In March 1980, she qualified to race the downhill at the U.S. Alpine Championships held at Squaw Valley. She was 18 years old.

"When I got into downhill, I then began to think about speed skiing," she recalls, "but I knew I needed a lot of practice on long skis and to increase my strength. It wasn't until 1982, at the qualifications at Squaw Valley, that I actually entered a contest."

One of only two women contestants at those trials, Culver sped down the course at 84 mph, fast enough to qualify her for the championships at Silverton, Colorado, on

the fastest track in the world.

The half-mile course on 13,487-foot Velocity Peak maintains an approximate 45-degree pitch for about half its length (1,200 vertical feet) before the hill gradually begins to flatten out. Skiers can reach high speeds quickly, enter the timing trap while accelerating, and then gradually decelerate without having to turn.

"Track conditions were the best ever, and the snow was colder this year and faster," Culver says.

As a result, records, which in the past seemed to fall grudgingly (Steve McKinney, absent from last year's tour, held on to his thought-unbreakable record for more than four years) were broken on the first and last days of the \$25,000 competition. In all, 21 racers skied faster than 120 mph. Culver

placed 17th overall, behind 16 men.

"It was a long season for me," she admits. "I was wound up for a while. The search for sponsorship, training, traveling to a race in Europe, and the car wreck were a lot of strain."

Culver, who spent last summer between Incline and Kings Beach, is optimistic about retaining her world record.

"I've been training since the spring, bicycling and lifting weights. You see, the whole idea is to go faster, and the course at Silverton hasn't reached its potential yet. There is a lot of room left up there to start down from." □

*Robert Frohlich of Olympic Valley, California, writes on sports for the Tahoe World and is an avid Sierra skier.*

## SKI STRATEGY (Continued from page 29)

431, you can be skiing Slide Mountain or Mount Rose in 30 to 40 minutes. The third area, Ski Incline, is another 25 minutes over 8,900-foot Mount Rose Summit. Slide was the alternate site for the 1960 Winter Olympics held at Squaw Valley, so it has challenging terrain. Mount Rose has a nicer day lodge and more intermediate terrain. Both areas are high, from 9,700 to 8,250 feet from top to bottom, so they get consistent snow. Ski Incline is a modern area with sophisticated snow-making and grooming, and has a day lodge at base and another on-hill overlooking Lake Tahoe. If the weather's bad, go to Incline as it is lower and more protected. Casinos, restaurants, and all kinds of lodging are at nearby Incline Village and Crystal Bay.

**Cluster 5, South Lake Tahoe/Stalene:** At the populous south end of Lake Tahoe is Heavenly Valley, which straddles two states in its 20 square miles. Heavenly has 26 lifts, including an access tram, and unlimited terrain for all abilities, day lodges, and bars. If it's sunny, be sure to have a drink or lunch at the Top of the Tram for fantastic views of Tahoe.

West on U.S. 50 is Echo Summit, with day lodge, intermediate terrain, and fewer crowds. Ten minutes west is Sierra Ski Ranch, a real surprise for the intermediate to expert skier with new scenic area on the backside, all levels of terrain, and fewer weekend crowds. Kirkwood, an excellent area 30 miles south of the lake via California 89 and 88, has condos and a big day lodge. It's sometimes crowded, but if the California-side road is closed, you may have the whole place to yourself.

Returning on U.S. 395, you can stop in Minden/Gardnerville for a Basque dinner, or enjoy dinner and a frostbite-relieving mineral bath at Walley's Hot Springs, just south of Genoa on Nevada 206. Look for the rising steam.

**Cluster 6, Mammoth/June Mountain:** These "bonus" areas are three to four hours south of Reno on U.S. 395 over 8,100-foot Conway Pass. June Mountain is less crowded on weekends, 10 lifts, all terrain. You'll see the runs as you leave the town of Lee Vining. A half hour further south, the town of Mammoth Lakes is three miles from the highway, and the slopes are six miles from town. Twenty-eight lifts make Mammoth the playland of Los Angeles, and with a gondola giving access to runs at 11,000 feet, Mammoth is a favorite year-end trek for Renoites eager to ski the last snow of the year. You can use shuttle buses to get around, or for a real treat, buy your ticket in town and hop on Chair 15, which follows the road to the slopes.

**Back to Cluster 2:** Tahoe Forest Hospital in Truckee is said to treat more ski injuries than any other hospital in the country. The most common injury? Sunburn.

So no matter what your strategy dictates or where you ski in the Sierra, don't forget the sunscreen lotion. □

*Don "Snowshu" Thompson, the well-known Reno ski activist, has been skiing at Lake Tahoe since 1947.*

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# THE NEVADA CALENDAR

## November & December 1983

Events and celebrations throughout the Silver State. Compiled by Melissa Cronin



LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

### Remarkable Relics Race to Red Rock

Gleaming relics from the past have been taken out of their garages all over the United States to be entered in the Imperial Palace Antique Auto Run in Las Vegas on Saturday, November 5. The autos are driven by car buffs, entertainers, and media celebrities dressed either in the style of the Roaring '20s or the era of their respective cars. Starting at 8 a.m., the entourage leaves the Imperial Palace, parades down the Strip, and cruises 17 miles west to the scenic loop at Red Rock Canyon. Then the cars race down the winding road for lunch at Spring Mountain Ranch before returning to the hotel late in the afternoon.

## Las Vegas/South

### November

**Paiute Photography**, thru 11/30, collection of photos taken by Indian photographer Harry Sampson in the early 1900s, Lost City Museum, Overton, 397-2193

**Art Exhibit**, thru 11/30, bread dough Christmas ornaments, ink studies, oils, and mixed media by Janet Ford, Library, Henderson, 565-9247

**Poetry Readings**, 1 with featured poet Carolyn Forch, and discussion in the conference room, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Professional All-Star Wrestling**, 1 7:30pm, Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, 385-9196

**"Thriller of the Year,"** 3-5, mystery by Glyn Jones, 8pm, Las Vegas Little Theater, 735-0167

**"The Grand Beehive,"** 3-27 photographs and artifacts of the beehive symbol in Mormon folk art, Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, Las Vegas, 385-0115

**"Impressions of Mary Cassatt,"** 4-5, one-woman show with Katie Ketchum, 8pm, Clark County Community College Theatre, North Las Vegas, 643-6060 ext. 370

**"The Last Ugly Man in Amerika,"** 4-5, contemporary play by Brighde Mullins about the rivalry between a violent Irish-American Marine captain and his peace-loving son, 8pm, Black Box Theatre, Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 739-3666

**Taekwondo Tournament**, 4-5, martial arts matches, Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, 385-9196

**Imperial Palace Antique Auto Run**, 5, 58-mile race for antique cars (1904-1936), Imperial Palace

to Red Rock Canyon, Las Vegas, 731-3311

**Art Exhibit**, 6-30, national competition of paintings in oils and acrylics; oil exhibit by Ross Harward and watercolors by Marjorie Lair, Las Vegas Art Museum, 647-4300

**Nevada 83**, 6-12/7 photo show, Las Vegas Art Museum, 647-4300

**Ballet National Espanol**, 7 Master Series' members only, 8pm, Ham Hall, UNLV, 739-3535

**"The Other Side of Midnight,"** 8, film, 6:30pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**"The Last Ugly Man in Amerika,"** 10-12, contemporary play, 8pm Black Box Theatre, Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 739-3666

**"Thriller of the Year,"** 10-13, mystery by Glyn Jones, 8pm Thurs-Sat., 3pm on Sun., Las Vegas Little Theater, 735-0167

**Moapa Valley Veteran's Day Celebration**, 11 11am parade down Main St., followed by Rotary Club aerial show at Perkins Field, Overton, 397-8088

**St. Jude's Nite of Stars**, 11 benefit for abused children by star entertainers with 6:30pm no host cocktail party, 8pm gourmet dinner, 9:30pm show hosted by Ed McMahan, \$125 or \$65, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, 648-5159

**Caliente Veterans Day**, 11 townwide celebration, 726-3637

**Striper Fishing Tournament and Seminar**, 11-13, with free seminar at 7pm Fri. on how to fish Lake Mead, at the Continental Hotel, followed by a striped bass fishing tournament at Callville Bay from dawn Sat. to 1pm Sun., \$20 entry fee, prizes and trophies, Las Vegas, 871-6838

**Street Sale and Bingo Party**, 12, merchants' and organizations' pre-holiday sale on sidewalks from 9am-6pm; bingo party starts at 7pm, Caliente, 726-3637

**U.S. Gas Balloon National Championship**, 12; at dusk entries leave the Tropicana Hotel on a cross-country flight to the Tropicana Hotel in Atlantic City; the balloonist landing closest to the Atlantic City hotel's front entrance will win \$100,000; Las Vegas, 739-2546

**Trio Serenata**, 13, chamber music, free, 3pm, Charleston Heights Arts Center, Las Vegas, 386-6383

**Michael Haydn's Serenade**, 13, Las Vegas Chamber Players, 2pm, Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 739-3420

**Thoroughbred Horse Sale**, 13-15, yearling sale, Triple Crown Ballroom, Union Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas, 386-2110

**Art Exhibit**, 13-12/9, work by Dickens Chang, opening reception on 13th from 1-3pm, free, Charleston Heights Art Gallery, Las Vegas, 386-6383



LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

## No Heartburn Here

It's war to the last fiery mouthful as over 200 contestants polish up their kettles for the Nevada Championship Chili Cook-off on December 10-11 at Circus Circus in Las Vegas. Cooks from as far as Hawaii and Canada will compete for the \$1,500 first-place prize and a chance to go to the World Chili Championships in Rosamond, California. There are two shifts on Saturday to determine the finalists, who then cook up another batch of chili on Sunday. You can taste free samples of the competitors' concoctions, which may be made from ground sirloin or rattlesnake fillet and buffalo rump, at the end of each shift. There also will be rooting squads, bands, dancing, strangely-costumed contestants, and beer and wine bars during the eighth annual contest.

**Victoria Symphony**, 14, Master Series' members only, Ham Concert Hall, 8pm, UNLV, 739-3801

**Chamber Music**, 17, concert with members of the Trio Serenata, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**"Thriller of the Year,"** 17-19, mystery by Glyn Jones, 8pm, Las Vegas Little Theater, 735-0167

**Backgammon Tournament**, 17-20, open to public, 8pm, Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, 739-2105

**John Houseman's Acting Company Performances**, 18-19, Shakespeare's "The Merry Wives of Windsor," on Fri., Marc Blitzstein's musical drama "The Cradle Will Rock," on Sat., 8pm, Judy Bayley Theater, UNLV, 739-3666

**UNLV v. Long Beach**, 19, football, 1pm, Silver Bowl, Las Vegas, 739-3207

**Caesars Palace Gymnastics Invitational**, 19, features the top 10 male gymnasts in the U.S., including national champion Mitch Gaylord, international stars Bart Conner and Pete Vidmar, and returning champions Jim Hartung and Scott Johnson, \$3 and \$6 tickets, 2pm, Caesars Palace Pavilion, Las Vegas, 731-7865

**Million Dollar Marathon**, 20, 26.2-mile run along the Las Vegas Strip and downtown area finishing at Cashman Field, \$10 entry fee until 11/12, \$15 thereafter, includes T-shirt, 7am starting time, Las Vegas, 459-6459

**Festival Chamber Players** 20, concert, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Thoroughbred Horse Sale**, 20-22, brood mare sale, Triple Crown Ballroom, Union Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas, 386-2110

**Art Exhibit**, 20-12/16, gallery opening and reception 20th at 3pm, Nevada Watercolor Society, 3pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**UNLV v. Univ. of Victoria, Canada**, 21 exhibition basketball game to open UNLV Rebels' season, 8:05pm, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**"Cabin in the Sky,"** 21 Classic Musical Film Series, free, 7pm, Charleston Heights Arts Center, Las Vegas, 386-6383

**"The Sword in the Stone,"** 22, film, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**"The Orphan's Revenge,"** 25-26, musical melodrama by Suzanne Buhner and Gene Casey, 8pm, Judy Bayley Theater, UNLV, 739-3666

**UNLV v. UNR**, 26, basketball, 8:05pm, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**Las Vegas Turkey Trot**, 27 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) race and 2-mile fun run along the Las Vegas Strip, benefits the Nevada Special Olympics, Las Vegas, 383-0211

**Haydn's Harmony Mass**, 27 concert by Musical Arts Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Douglas R. Peterson, free, 3pm, Charleston Heights Arts Center, Las Vegas, 451-6672

**Nevada Chamber Ensemble**, 27 concert with Wolf Adler, 2pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Concert**, 30, featuring pianist Leonard Pennario, Community Concert, 8pm, Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 648-8962

**Jack Straus World Match Play Poker Championships**, 30-12/14; Straus, a top professional poker player, presents his first match play tournament, open to all players, Frontier Hotel, Las Vegas, 734-0110

## December

**Nevada 83**, thru 7 photo show, Las Vegas Art Museum, 647-4300

**Art Exhibit**, thru 9, work by Dickens Chang, free, Charleston Heights Arts Gallery, Las Vegas, 386-6383

**Jack Straus World Match Play Poker Championships**, thru 14, open to all poker players, Frontier Hotel, Las Vegas, 734-0110

**"The Orphan's Revenge,"** 1-4, musical melodrama by Suzanne Buhner and Gene Casey, 8pm, Thurs.-Sat., 2pm on Sun., Judy Bayley Theater, UNLV, 739-3666

**Art Exhibit**, 1-31, dried flowers, watercolor, and oil paintings by Wanda Bachman, Henderson Library, Henderson, 565-9247

**Caesars Palace Wrestling Invitational**, 2-3, with more than 30 top college wrestling teams, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3480

**"Talley Folly,"** 2-3, romantic comedy, 8pm, Clark County Community College Theatre, North Las Vegas, 643-6060 ext. 370

**Christmas Concert**, 2-4, Las Vegas Civic Ballet, 8pm on Fri. and Sat., 2pm on Sun., \$4, Charleston Heights Arts Center, Las Vegas, 386-6383

**Boulder City Christmas Parade**, 3, includes high school marching bands, horses, floats, Santa, street decorations, free candy and balloons, 10am, Nevada Highway, 293-2034

**Hidden Valley Trail Ride**, 3, 30-mile horseback ride & Pony Express race from Sloan to Jean; food, drink & dancing afterwards, 9am, Sloan, 454-2500

**Las Vegas Michelob Rugby Challenge**, 3-4, tournament with 32 teams from around the world including Canada and New Zealand, 8am, Sunset Park, Las Vegas, 361-0608

**"The Grand Beehive,"** 3-31 photographs and artifacts on the beehive symbol in Mormon folk art, Lost City Museum, Overton, 397-2193

**Professional All-Star Wrestling**, 4, 7:30pm, Sports Pavilion, Showboat, Las Vegas, 385-9196

**Photography Exhibit**, 4-30, photos by Irene Brennan, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Art Exhibit**, 4-1/4/84, porcelain hangings by John Bergman, Las Vegas Art Museum, 647-4300



## The Rebels and the Pack

College basketball fans in Nevada have something else to cheer about besides their two teams this winter—two brand-new sports arenas. The Rebels will be breaking away at the Thomas and Mack Center on the Las Vegas campus, and Reno's Wolf Pack will be stuffing 'em at the Lawlor Events Center. This year the Rebels play host to two tournaments, the Rebel Roundup on December 22-23 and the UNLV Rebel Classic December 28 and 30. UNR's Wolf Pack Classic is December 28-29. For a complete schedule of home games in November and December, check the calendar listing.

**Desert Readings**, 5, featured poet is William Pitts Root, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Las Vegas Poetry Group**, 6, meeting and discussion, open to public, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**"Cool Hand Luke"**, 6, film, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Roger Wagner Chorale**, 8, Master Series' members only, 8pm, Ham Hall, UNLV, 739-3801

**Thoroughbred Handicappers Challenge**, 8-11 Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, 796-7529

**"The Orphan's Revenge"**, 8-11 musical melodrama, 8pm on Thurs.-Sat., 2pm on Sun., Judy Bayley Theatre, UNLV, 739-3666

**Caesars World Cup and Grand Prix Bodybuilding Competition**, 9-10, women's and men's competition followed by movie, "Pumping Iron III," event is co-produced by George Butler and Arnold Schwarzenegger, Caesars Palace, 731-7865

**"Talley Folley"**, 9-10, romantic comedy, 8pm, Clark County Community College Theatre, North Las Vegas, 643-6060 ext. 370

**Christmas Concert**, 9-11 Las Vegas Civic Ballet, 8pm on Fri. and Sat., 2pm on Sun., \$4, Charleston Heights Arts Center, Las Vegas, 386-6383

**Blackjack Tournament**, 9-11 7pm, Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, 739-2105

**Caliente Christmas Parade**, 10, 1pm, candy will be handed out by Santa Claus, followed by caroling around the community Christmas tree, downtown Caliente, 726-3637

**UNLV v. West Virginia**, 10, basketball, 8:05pm, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**Russ Morgan Orchestra**, 10, Sports Pavilion, Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, 385-9196

**Parade of Lights**, 10, boats bedecked in Christmas lights leave Callville Bay Marina at 5:30pm, make their way across the lake past Boulder Beach, and wind back to Callville Bay, with general celebration at marina, Lake Mead, 565-8958

**Children's Christmas Parade**, 10, parade at 11am with all entrants under age of 18, Henderson, 565-8951

**Nevada Championship Chili Cook-Off**, 10-11 competition to pick representative to the World Chili Cook-off, with music, dancing, and marching bands; free; Circus Circus, Las Vegas, 734-0410

**Christmas Pops Concert**, 10-11 2 pm, Tiffany Theatre, Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, 739-3420

**Art Exhibit**, 11-1/6/84, exhibition of 40 works of printmaking from Arizona Fine Arts Presses, including work by Fritz Scholder, Shahrokh Rezvani, and Beth Ames Swartz, Charleston Heights Art Gallery, Las Vegas, 386-6384

**1983 Tropicana U.S. National Table Tennis Tournament**, 14-21 Tropicana Sports Complex, Las Vegas, 739-2581

**"Nutcracker"**, 15-18, Nevada Dance Theatre, 8pm on Thurs.-Sat., 2pm and 8pm on Sun., Judy Bayley Theatre, UNLV, 739-3838

**"Talley Folley"**, 16-17 romantic comedy, 8pm on Fri., 2pm on Sat., Clark County Community College Theatre, North Las Vegas, 643-6060 ext. 370

**Frontier 250 Off-Road Race**, 15-17 250-mile course, free for spectators, Frontier Hotel, Las Vegas, 734-0110

**UNLV v. Kansas State**, 17 basketball, 8:05pm, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**Chamber Music**, 17-18, "Metaphysical Vegas!" by Edwin London and "No Exit!" by Beth Mahocic, 7pm on Sat., 2pm on Sun., Black Box Theatre, Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 739-3420

**Messiah**, 18, Musical Arts Chorus, \$2, \$3, & \$4, Holiday Inn Ballroom, Las Vegas, 451-6672

**Tad Cheyenne Schutt Art Exhibit**, 18-1/13/84, winner of Centel Telephone Book Cover Award, Flamingo Gallery, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**"The King and I"**, 20, film, 6pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

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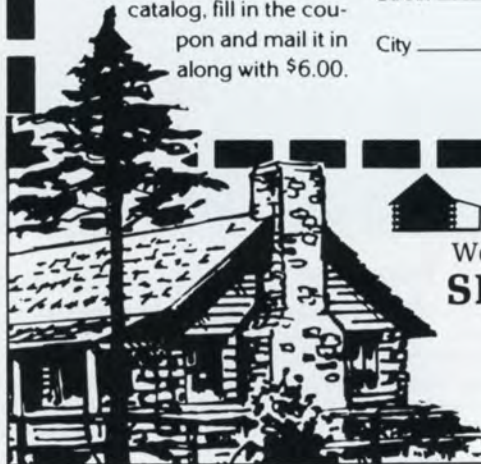
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## THE TENNESSEE LETTERS: From Carson Valley, 1857-1860

Compiled by  
David Thompson

A mystery solved! The Genoa Correspondent for the *San Francisco Herald*, writing a series of lively accounts of activities on the Emigrant Trail, signed himself "Tennessee." His identity remained unknown until David Thompson recently happened upon a letter in the *Territorial Enterprise* (1859) which held the missing clue. The discovery of the real "Tennessee" increases the significance of this collection for the historian and makes entertaining reading for anyone interested in Nevada. An excellent Christmas gift!

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**Trio Serenata Christmas Concert**, 22, violoncello trio, 7pm, Flamingo Library, Las Vegas, 733-7810

**Rebel Roundup**, 22-23, UNLV basketball team hosts James Madison, Southern Illinois, and Southern Methodist, 6:30 and 9pm games both days, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**UNLV Rebel Classic**, 28-30, basketball tournament with Clemson, Georgetown, and Marshall, Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV, 739-3678

**Russ Morgan Orchestra**, 31 Sports Pavilion, Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, 385-9196

**New Year's Eve Fireworks**, 31 street dancing, Union Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas, 386-2110

## Central

### November

**Fashion Fair**, 12, fashion show, commercial displays, presented by the White Pine Chamber of Commerce Merchants Bureau, Ely, 289-8877

**Nevada State Cattlemen's Assn. Convention**, 13-16, Ely, 289-3720

## North

### November

**Art Exhibit**, thru 29, acrylic paintings by Ruby Harrison, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Elko, 738-3418

**Jackpot Antique Show**, 5-6, convention center in Cactus Pete's Casino, Jackpot, 755-2321 or 800-821-1103

**Arts and Crafts Show**, 19-20, convention center in Cactus Pete's Casino, Jackpot, 755-2321 or 800-821-1103

## Hot Races in Vegas and Carson

Exciting car races take place in December in Carson City and Las Vegas. The Carson City International Pro Rally, previously held in Reno, is December 10-11, and covers 500 miles of backroads and mining trails in the hills around Carson City, Virginia City, Yerington, and the Lake Tahoe area. Racing against time, the drivers, from all over the world, try to win part of the rally's \$15,000 purse. On Friday the 9th, spectators can view the cars and drivers close-up during tech inspection and registration at the Carson City Community Center. The Frontier 250 Off-Road Race on Saturday, December 17, starts at Sloan, 15 miles south of Las Vegas, with the drivers making two trips around a rugged 125-mile desert-and-mountain course. Tech inspection and registration take place at the Frontier Hotel on December 15 and 16.



**Pre-Holiday Show**, 19-20, merchandise show and festival of trees with decorated trees auctioned, 6-9pm on Sat., 11am-5pm on Sun., Convention Center, Elko, 738-9783

**Art Exhibit**, 30-1/4/84, acrylic and landscape paintings, and children's portraits, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Elko, 738-3418

### December

**Chariot Race**, 3, horse-drawn chariot races are tentatively scheduled every Sat. thru March, chariot track, Wells, 752-3867

**Christmas Craft Show**, 3-4, 11am-6pm on Sat., 11am-4pm on Sun., Convention Center, Winnemucca, 623-2225

**Christmas Celebration**, 24, free party for all children, goodies will be handed out by Santa Claus who arrives on a fire truck, 2pm, Cactus Pete's Casino, Jackpot, 755-2321

**New Year's Celebration**, 31 free hats and whistles, fire whistle sounded at midnight, Cactus Pete's Casino, Jackpot, 755-2321

## Reno/West

### November

**Sahara Tahoe's \$77,000 Craps Shootout**, thru 2, three-round tournament hosted by Amarillo Slim, with a \$750 buy-in, Sahara Tahoe, 588-5792

**Harrah's Pacific Coast Cutting Futurity**, thru 6, State Fairgrounds, Reno, 786-3232

**Nevada At War**, thru 15, uniforms and military artifacts from the Indian War Period through Viet Nam, Churchill County Museum, Fallon, 423-3677

**Art Showing**, thru 15, annual alumni exhibition featuring a retrospective of Joanne deLongchamps and an exhibit by Ed Martinez, 8am-5pm Mon.-Fri., Church Fine Arts Building, UNR, 784-6658



**Traditions in Western American Art**, thru 12/31 works by Remington, Russell, Borein, Paxson, Lee, and Dron, Sierra Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, 329-3333

**"Fiddler on the Roof,"** 3-27 musical, opening night at 8pm on Nov. 3, \$25, includes champagne and food plate, thereafter performances every Sat. and Sun. and on Thanksgiving through the 27th, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, 323-8002

**"Murder on the Nile,"** 4-5, Agatha Christie mystery, 8:30pm, Reno Little Theater, Reno, 329-0661

**Ladies Invitational Slot Marathon**, 4-6, Reno Ramada Hotel, Reno, 788-2000

**Circus Circus "Run Reno" Marathon**, 5, race starts at 9am at Circus Circus and runs through the streets and scenic suburbs of Reno, ending back at the hotel, 329-0711

**UNR v. Pacific**, 5, football, 1pm, Mackay Stadium, UNR, Reno, 784-4697

**Barbershop Show**, 5, Comstock Chorus, Peninsula Chorus from Palo Alto, and Carson City Chorus, 8pm, Community Center, Carson City, 345-0555

**"Fiddler on the Roof,"** 5-6, musical, \$15 and \$20 8pm show on Sat., \$5, \$10, and \$15 2pm show on Sun., John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, 323-8007

**"Murder on the Nile,"** 6, Agatha Christie mystery, 2pm, Reno Little Theater, Reno, 329-0661

**Nevada Book Fair '83**, 6, free, recent books by Nevada publishers, 10am-4pm, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, 789-0190

**Carmelite Monastery Open House**, 6, tour of monastery and print shop; Christmas cards, all-occasion cards, matted and framed prints, calendars, crafts, and baked goods by the Sisters will be sold, 11am-5pm, Carmelite Monastery, 1950 La Fond Dr., Reno, 323-3236

**National Sellers Cattle Sale**, 7 State Fairgrounds, Reno, 308-226-2576

**Christmas Party & Bazaar**, 10, Santa arrives by helicopter to greet children, followed by party and a bazaar, noon-2pm, Minden Park & C.V.I.C. Hall, Minden, 782-2172

**"The Mousetrap,"** 10-12, Agatha Christie mystery, \$5, Community College, South Lake Tahoe, 916-541-4660

**"Murder on the Nile,"** 10-13, Agatha Christie mystery, 8:30pm Thurs.-Sat., 2pm on Sun., Reno Little Theater, Reno, 329-0661

**"Baal,"** 11-12, play by Bertolt Brecht, 8pm, Nevada Repertory Company, Church Fine Arts Theater, UNR, 784-6505

**Hidden Cave Tours,** 12, meet 9:45am at Churchill County Museum, Fallon, 882-1631 or 423-3677

**Civil War Symposium,** 12, free, 9-10am social hour with continental breakfast, followed by lectures, slide show, and photo exhibits until 6pm, Comstock Hotel, Reno, 359-3559

**Gold's Gym Bodybuilding Show,** 12, free, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105

**"Fiddler on the Roof,"** 12-13, musical, \$15 and \$20 8pm show on Sat., \$5, \$10, and \$15 2pm show on Sun., John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, 323-8007

**Art Exhibit,** 12-12/31 Joseph Zinker, Survey Exhibition 1962-1982, and The Art of the Monotypes featuring contemporary American artists, Sierra Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, 329-3333

**Tom States Car Races,** 13, State Fairgrounds, Reno, 789-6917

**Interfaith Gospel Concert,** 13, 3pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105

**Warren Miller Ski Film,** 16, 8pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105

**"The Mousetrap,"** 16-19, Agatha Christie mystery, \$5, Community College, South Lake Tahoe, 916-541-4660

**Wayne Newton Benefit for St. Gall Catholic Church,** 18, benefit dinner show, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, 782-2306

**Lecture,** 18, Charles Cameron, British poet, discusses the traditional American Indian view of animals, free, 7pm, Center for Religion and Life, UNR, 348-7760

**Ladies Invitational Slot Marathon,** 18-20, Reno Ramada Hotel, Reno, 788-2000

**Craft Festival,** 18-20, Convention Center, Reno, 785-4800

**Art Showing,** 18-12/16, Piranesi Prints and works of Fred Reid, 8am-5pm Mon.-Fri., Church Fine Arts Building, UNR, 784-6658

**UNR v. Montana State,** 19, football, 1pm, Mackay Stadium, UNR, 784-4697

**Ski Swap,** 19, new and used equipment for sale, 9am-3pm, Billingshurst School Gym, 1129 Plumas St., Reno, 785-2262

**Boy Scout Expo,** 19, Convention Center, Reno, 785-4800

**Camp Nye Program With Slides,** 19, program on Nevada's last Civil War post presented by William McConnell, Lt. Colonel (U.S. Army retired), free, 2pm, Pub Room, Hazen Bar, Hazen, 867-3066

**Craft Jamboree,** 19-20, free, 10am-5pm, Sparks Recreation Center, 356-2376

**Christmas Fair,** 19-20, 11am-7pm on Sat., 11am-4pm on Sun., Carson City Jr. High, 882-1565

**"Fiddler on the Roof,"** 19-20, musical, \$15 and \$20 8pm show on Sat., \$5, \$10, and \$15 2pm show on Sun., John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, 323-8007

**Tanner's World Wide Flea Market,** 20, Convention Center, Reno, 785-4800

**Ramblin' Wheel's Celebration,** 20, Turkey Run (motorcycle poker run); finish of Grand Tour with patch and pin presentations; Sparks, 358-6335 or 673-3225

**UNR v. Univ. of Victoria, Canada,** 23, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697

**Puccini's "Madame Butterfly,"** 25-26, opera performed by the Western Opera Theater, presented by San Francisco Opera Center and North Lake Tahoe Symphony Assn., \$10, 8pm, Cloud's Cal Neva, Crystal Bay, 831-4126

**Martial Arts Tournament,** 25-27, Caesars Tahoe, Stateline, 588-3515

**Professional Boxing,** 26, first bout at 8pm, tickets \$12.50-\$15, Hyatt Lake Tahoe, Incline Village, 831-1111



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The glitter of the New York stage will light up the Celebrity Room at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks, when "Fiddler on the Roof" is performed for 10 days in November. Robert Mesrobian, director of the Hattiesburg Civic Light Opera in Mississippi, portrays Tevye, a poor Jewish dairy farmer, in the musical. The story deals with Tevye's struggle to fight and survive the breakdown of family tradition during the Russian revolution. Opening night is Thursday, November 3, and the musical will run every weekend throughout the month with a special Thanksgiving performance on the 24th.



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**Hidden Cave Tours**, 26, meet 9:45am at Churchill County Museum, Fallon, 882-1631 or 423-3677  
**Reno Chamber Orchestra Performance**, 27 3pm, Reno Little Theater, Reno, 329-1324  
**Concert**, 29, the San Francisco Consort playing unique instruments of the Renaissance, 8pm, Brewery Arts Center, Carson City, 883-1976  
**UNR v. Portland**, 29, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697  
**UNR Faculty Recital**, 30, clarinet recital, 8pm, Church Fine Arts Theatre, UNR, 784-6145

## December

**Sierra Nevada Chorale**, 2, 8pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105  
**UNR Symphonic Orchestra Concert**, 2, 8pm, Church Fine Arts Theatre, UNR, 784-6145  
**Southern California Old-Timers Hockey**, 2-4,

Convention Center, Reno, 785-4800  
**Reno Christmas Arts and Crafts Fair**, 2-4, more than 80 craftsmen and hobbyists from Reno area, live Christmas music and dance, State Fairgrounds, Reno, 825-7258  
**"Star of Wonder,"** 2-31 planetarium show presenting astronomical explanations for the Christmas Star, \$2.75 for ages 13-59, \$1.75 for children 6-12 and senior citizens over 59, shows at 1pm, 3pm, and 7:30pm Mon.-Sun., plus 11am on Sat., Fleischmann Planetarium, UNR, 784-4812  
**Christmas Faire**, 3, handcrafted gift items for sale, free, 10am-5pm, Churchill County High School, Fallon, 423-2181  
**Genoa Christmas Faire**, 3, 10am-5pm, Town Hall, Genoa, 782-3397  
**UNR v. Utah**, 3, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697

**Magic of Santa Christmas Faire**, 3-4, craftwork and baked goods, free, 10am-5pm on Sat., 10am-4pm on Sun., California Bldg., Idlewild Park, Reno, 785-2262  
**Christmas Exhibition**, 3-31, old toy trains from private collections, Sierra Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, 329-3333  
**Concert**, 4, UNR Symphonic Choir, Reno Chamber Orchestra, and UNR Concert Choir, 3pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105  
**Winter Concert**, 5, Washoe County School District Youth Symphony/Junior Orchestra, 8pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-5105  
**Las Vegas Brass Quintet**, 8, 8pm Brewery Arts Center, Carson City, 883-1976  
**Lecture**, 9, Gary Synder, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, will do a poetry reading revealing his ethics towards animals, free, 7pm, Center for Religion and Life, UNR, 348-7760  
**Ladies Invitational Slot Marathon**, 9-11, Reno Ramada Hotel, Reno, 788-2000  
**Carson City International Pro Rally**, 9-11, a 500-mile car race over high desert and mountain terrain with a minimum purse of \$15,000. On Fri. registration, tech inspection, and party at Carson City Community Center; on Sat. race covers Carson City, Virginia City, and Yerington; on Sun. race covers Carson City, Kingsbury Grade, and Lake Tahoe areas; Carson City, 323-7446  
**Hidden Cave Tours**, 10, meet 9:45am at the Churchill County Museum, Fallon, 882-1631 or 423-3677  
**Carson City Christmas Arts and Crafts Show**, 10-11 more than 40 local craftsmen, Community Center, Carson City, 825-7258  
**CCRA Railroad Show**, 10-11, railroad artifacts, small steam engine, large modular railroad layout operating, video displays, Silver City Mall, Carson City, 885-4420  
**UNR v. UNLV**, 13, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697  
**U.S. Gymnastics Federation Single Elimination Championships**, 13-19, features America's top 16 men and top 16 women gymnasts comprising the U.S. National and Olympic team, MGM Grand Hotel, Reno, 747-2719  
**UNR v. Southern Oregon State**, 15, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697  
**Holiday Craft Gift Show**, 16-24, handmade arts and crafts, Santa Claus, live entertainment, baked goods, gift wrapping service, adults \$1.50, children ages 6-16 and senior citizens \$1 noon-9pm Mon.-Fri., 10am-9pm on Sat. and Sun., State Fairgrounds, Reno, 825-7258 or 827-2823  
**UNR v. San Jose**, 17, basketball, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697  
**"Nutcracker,"** 17-18, Nevada Opera Assn., 2:15pm, Pioneer Theater, Reno, 786-4046  
**Nevada State Council on the Arts Christmas Open House**, 21 4-6pm, Council office, 329 Flint St., Reno, 789-0225  
**"Nutcracker,"** 22-23, Theatre Ballet of San Francisco, Caesars Tahoe, Stateline, 588-3515  
**Hidden Cave Tours**, 24, meet 9:45am at the Churchill County Museum, Fallon, 882-1631 or 423-3677  
**Wolf Pack Classic**, 28-29, UNR basketball team hosts San Diego, Florida A&M, and Cal. Davis, 7:30pm, Lawlor Events Center, UNR, 784-4697  
**Ladies Invitational Slot Marathon**, 29-31 Reno Ramada Hotel, Reno, 788-2000 □

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# Basin and Range

By John McPhee

*The Nevada desert in recent years has been the center of debate over such issues as the Sagebrush Rebellion, privatization, wilderness areas, and MX supersilos. Thus it is particularly refreshing to read (or reread) Basin and Range, John McPhee's book about the evolution and future of our deserts and mountains, a scenario in which nature has the deciding hand.*

*In the following excerpt from Basin and Range, McPhee and Princeton geology professor Kenneth Deffeyes travel through the mountains south of Winnemucca. Their journey is the result of the author's desire to "develop at least a rudimentary understanding of the long history and odd behavior of the planetary surface." They have come from New Jersey to the Great Basin because, as Deffeyes says, "The earth is splitting apart there, quite possibly opening a seaway. If you want to see happening right now what happened here [in New Jersey] two hundred million years ago, you can see it all in Nevada."—Ed.*

**B**asin. Fault. Range. Basin. Fault. Range. A mile of relief between basin and range. Stillwater Range. Pleasant Valley. Tobin Range. Jersey Valley. Sonoma Range. Pumpnickel Valley. Shoshone Range. Reese River Valley. Pequop Mountains. Steptoe Valley. Ondographic rhythms of the Basin and Range. We are maybe forty miles off the interstate, in the Pleasant Valley basin, looking up at the Tobin Range. At the nine-thousand-foot level, there is a stratum of cloud against the shoulders of the mountains, hanging like a ring of Saturn. The summit of Mt. Tobin stands clear, above the cloud. When we crossed the range, we came through a ranch on the ridgeline where sheep were fenced around a running brook and bales of hay were bright green. Junipers in the mountains were thickly hung with berries, and the air

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



Pyramid Lake's ancient shoreline.

was unadulterated gin. This country from afar is synopsisized and dismissed as "desert"—the home of the coyote and the pocket mouse, the side-blotched lizard and the vagrant shrew, the MX rocket and the pallid bat. There are minks and river otters in the Basin and Range. There are deer and antelope, porcupines and cougars, pelicans, cormorants, and common loons. There are Bonaparte's gulls and marbled godwits, American coots and Virginia rails. Pheasants. Grouse. Sandhill cranes. Ferruginous hawks and flammulated owls. Snow geese. This Nevada terrain is not corrugated, like the folded Appalachians, like a tubal air mattress, like a rippled potato chip. This is not—in that compressive manner—a ridge-and-valley situation. Each range here is like a warship standing on its own, and the Great Basin is an ocean of loose sediment with these mountain ranges standing in it as if they were members of a fleet without precedent, assembled at Guam to assault Japan. Some of the ranges are forty miles long, others a hundred, a hundred and fifty. They point generally north. The basins that separate them—ten and fifteen miles wide—will run on for fifty, a hundred, two hundred and fifty miles with lone, daisy-petalled windmills standing over sage and wild rye. Animals tend to be content with their home ranges and not to venture out across the big dry valleys. "Imagine a chipmunk hiking across one of these basins," Deffeyes remarks. "The faunas in the high ranges here are quite distinct from one to another. Animals are isolated like Darwin's finches in the Galapagos. These ranges are truly islands."

Supreme over all is silence. Discounting the cry of the occasional bird, the wailing of a pack of coyotes, silence—a great spatial silence—is pure in the Basin and Range. It is a soundless immensity with mountains in it. You stand, as we do now, and look up at a high mountain front, and turn your head and look fifty miles down the valley, and

STUART MURLAND PHOTOS



Mountains of the Black Rock Desert. "These ranges are truly islands," Deffeyes says.

there is utter silence. It is the silence of the winter forests of the Yukon, here carried high to the ridgelines of the ranges. As the physicist Freeman Dyson has written in *Disturbing the Universe*, "It is a soul-shattering silence. You hold your breath and hear absolutely nothing. No rustling of leaves in the wind, no rumbling of distant traffic, no chatter of birds or insects or children. You are alone with God in that silence. There in the white flat silence I began for the first time to feel a slight sense of shame for what we were proposing to do. Did we really intend to invade this silence with our trucks and bulldozers and after a few years leave it a radioactive junkyard?"

What Deffeyes finds pleasant here in Pleasant Valley is the aromatic sage. Deffeyes grew up all over the West, his father a petroleum engineer, and he says without apparent irony that the smell of sagebrush is one of two odors that will unfailingly bring upon him an attack of nostalgia, the other being the scent of an oil refinery. Flash floods have caused boulders the size of human heads to come tumbling off the range. With alluvial materials of finer size, they have piled up in fans at the edge of the basin. ("The cloudburst is the dominant sculptor here.") The fans are unconsolidated. In time to come, they will pile up to such enormous thicknesses that they will sink deep and be heated and compressed to form conglomerate. Erosion, which provides the material to build the fans, is tearing down the mountains even as they rise. Mountains are not somehow created whole and subsequently worn away. They wear down as they come up, and these mountains have been rising and eroding in fairly even ratio for millions of years—rising and shedding sediment steadily through time, always the same, never the same, like row upon row of fountains. In the southern part of the province, in the Mojave, the ranges have stopped rising and are gradually wearing away. The Shadow Mountains.

The Dead Mountains, Old Dad Mountains, Cowhole Mountains, Bullion, Mule, and Chocolate Mountains. They are inselberge now, buried ever deeper in their own waste. For the most part, though, the ranges are rising, and there can be no doubt of it here, hundreds of miles north of the Mojave, for we are looking at a new seismic scar that runs as far as we can see. It runs along the foot of the mountains, along the fault where the basin meets the range. From out in the valley, it looks like a long, buff-painted, essentially horizontal stripe. Up close, it is a gap in the vegetation, where plants growing side by side were suddenly separated by several metres, where, one October evening, the basin and the range—Pleasant Valley, Tobin Range—moved, all in an instant, apart. They jumped sixteen feet. The erosion rate at which the mountains were coming down was an inch a century. So in the mountains' contest with erosion they gained in one moment about twenty thousand years. These mountains do not rise like bread. They sit still for a long time and build up tension, and then suddenly jump. Passively, they are eroded for millennia, and then they jump again. They have been doing this for about eight million years. This fault, which jumped in 1915, opened like a zipper far up the valley, and, exploding into the silence, tore along the mountain base for upward of twenty miles with a sound that suggested a runaway locomotive.

"This is the sort of place where you really do not put a nuclear plant," says Deffeyes. "There was other action in the neighborhood at the same time—in the Stillwater Range, the Sonoma Range, Pumpnickel Valley. Actually, this is not a particularly spectacular scarp. The lesson is that the whole thing—the whole Basin and Range, or most of it—is alive. The earth is moving. The faults are moving. There are hot springs all over the province. There are young volcanic rocks. Fault scars everywhere. The world is splitting open and coming apart.

*The crust—in this region between the Rockies and the Sierra—is spreading out, being stretched, being thinned, being literally pulled to pieces. The sites of Reno and Salt Lake City, on opposite sides of the province, have moved apart 50 miles.*

You see a sudden break in the sage like this and it says to you that a fault is there and a fault block is coming up. This is a gorgeous, fresh, young, active fault scarp. It's growing. The range is lifting up. This Nevada topography is what you see *during* mountain building. There are no foothills. It is all too young. It is live country. This is the tectonic, active, spreading, mountain-building world. To a nongeologist, it's just ranges, ranges, ranges."

Most mountain ranges around the world are the result of compression, of segments of the earth's crust being brought together, bent, mashed, thrust and folded, squeezed up into the sky—the Himalaya, the Appalachians, the Alps, the Urals, the Andes. The ranges of the Basin and Range came up another way. The crust—in this region between the Rockies and the Sierra—is spreading out, being stretched, being thinned, being literally pulled to pieces. The sites of Reno and Salt Lake City, on opposite sides of the province, have moved apart fifty miles. The crust of the Great Basin has broken into blocks. The blocks are not, except for simplicity's sake, analogous to dominoes. They are irregular in shape. They more truly suggest stretch marks. Which they are. They trend north-south because the direction of the stretching is east-west. The breaks, or faults, between them are not vertical but dive into the earth at roughly sixty-degree angles, and this, from the outset, affected the centers of gravity of the great blocks in a way that caused them to tilt. Classically, the high edge of one touched the low edge of another and formed a kind of trough, or basin. The high edge—sculpted, eroded, serrated by weather—turned into mountains. The detritus of the mountains rolled into the basin. The basin filled with water—at first, it was fresh blue water—and accepted layer upon layer of sediment from the mountains, accumulating weight, and thus unbalancing the block even further. Its tilt became more pronounced. In the manner of a seesaw, the high, mountain side of the block went higher and the low, basin side went lower until the block as a whole reached a state of precarious and temporary truce with God, physics, and mechanical and chemical erosion, not to mention, far below, the agitated mantle, which was running a temperature hotter than normal, and was, almost surely, controlling the action. Basin and range. Integral fault blocks: low side the basin, high side the range. For five hundred miles they nudged one another across the province of the Basin and Range. With extra faulting,

and whatnot, they took care of their own irregularities. Some had their high sides on the west, some on the east. The escarpment of the Wasatch Mountains—easternmost expression of this immense suite of mountains—faced west. The Sierra—the westernmost, the highest, the predominant range, with Donner Pass only halfway up it—presented its escarpment to the east. As the developing Sierra made its skyward climb—as it went on up past ten and twelve and fourteen thousand feet—it became so predominant that it cut off the incoming Pacific rain, cast a rain shadow (as the phenomenon is called) over lush, warm, Floridian and verdant Nevada. Cut it off and kept it dry.

We move on (we're in a pickup) into dusk—north up Pleasant Valley, with its single telephone line on sticks too skinny to qualify as poles. The big flanking ranges are in alpenglow. Into the cold clear sky come the ranking stars. Jackrabbits appear, and crisscross the road. We pass the darkening shapes of cattle. An eerie trail of vapor traverses the basin, sent up by a clear, hot stream. It is only a couple of feet wide, but it is running swiftly and has multiple sets of hot white rapids. In the source springs, there is a thumping sound of boiling and rage. Beside the springs are lucid green pools, rimmed with accumulated travertine, like the travertine walls of Lincoln Center, the travertine pools of Havasu Canyon, but these pools are too hot to touch. Fall in there and you are Brunswick stew. "This is a direct result of the crustal spreading," Deffeyes says. "It brings hot mantle up near the surface. There is probably a fracture here, through which the water is coming up to this row of springs. The water is rich in dissolved minerals. Hot springs like these are the source of vein-type ore deposits. It's the same story that I told you about the hydrothermal transport of gold. When rainwater gets down into hot rock, it brings up what it happens to find there—silver, tungsten, copper, gold. An ore-deposit map and a hot-springs map will look much the same. Seismic waves move slowly through hot rock. The hotter the rock, the slower the waves. Nowhere in the continental United States do seismic waves move more slowly than they do beneath the Basin and Range. So we're not woofing when we say there's hot mantle down there. We've measured the heat."

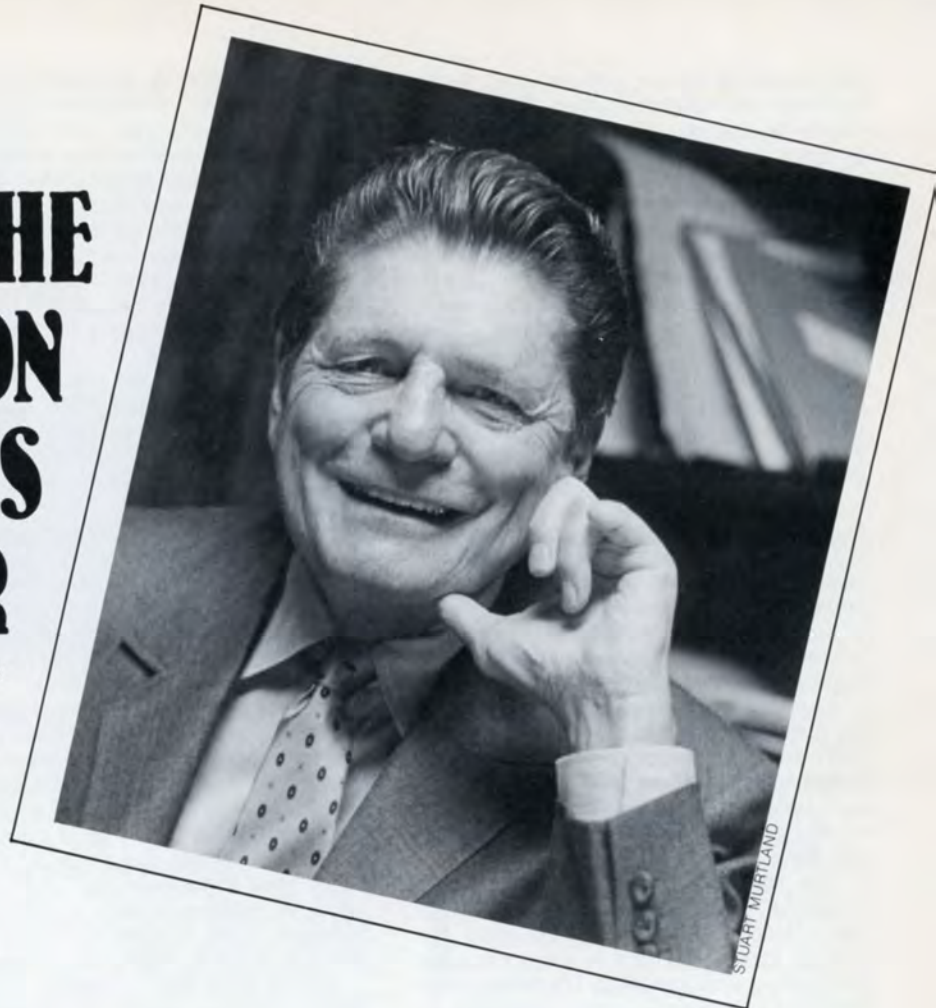
The basin-range fault blocks in a sense are floating on the mantle. In fact, the earth's crust everywhere in a sense is floating on the mantle. Add weight to the

crust and it rides deeper, remove cargo and it rides higher, exactly like a vessel at a pier. Slowly disassemble the Rocky Mountains and carry the material in small fragments to the Mississippi Delta. The delta builds down. It presses ever deeper on the mantle. Its depth at the moment exceeds twenty-five thousand feet. The heat and the pressure are so great down there that the silt is turning into siltstone, the sand into sandstone, the mud into shale. For another example, the last Pleistocene ice sheet loaded two miles of ice onto Scotland, and that dunked Scotland in the mantle. After the ice melted, Scotland came up again, lifting its beaches high into the air. Isostatic adjustment. Let go a block of wood that you hold underwater and it adjusts itself to the surface isostatically. A frog sits on the wood. It goes down. He vomits. It goes up a little. He jumps. It adjusts. Wherever landscape is eroded away, what remains will rise in adjustment. Older rock is lifted to view. When, for whatever reason, crust becomes thicker, it adjusts downward. All of this—with the central image of the basin-range fault blocks floating in the mantle—may suggest that the mantle is molten, which it is not. The mantle is solid. Only in certain pockets near the surface does it turn into magma and squirt upward. The temperature of the mantle varies widely, as would the temperature of anything that is two thousand miles thick. Under the craton, it is described as chilled. By surface standards, though, it is generally white hot, everywhere around the world—white hot and solid but magisterially viscous, permitting the crust above it to "float." Deffeyes was in his bathtub one Saturday afternoon thinking about the viscosity of the mantle. Suddenly he stood up and reached for a towel. "Piano wire!" he said to himself, and he dressed quickly and went to the library to look up a book on piano tuning and to calculate the viscosity of the wire. Just what he guessed—10<sup>22</sup> poises. Piano wire. Look under the hood of a well-tuned Steinway and you are looking at strings that could float a small continent. They are rigid, but ever so slowly they will sag, will slacken, will deform and give way, with the exact viscosity of the earth's mantle. "And that," says Deffeyes, "is what keeps the piano tuner in business." More miles, and there appears ahead of us something like a Christmas tree alone in the night. It is Winnemucca, there being no other possibility. Neon looks good in Nevada. The tawdriness is refined out of it in so much wide black space. We drive on and on toward the glow of colors. It is still far away and it has not increased in size. We pass nothing. Deffeyes says, "On these roads, it's ten to the minus five that anyone will come along." The better part of an hour later, we come to the beginnings of the casino-flashing town. The news this year is that dollar slot machines are outdrawing nickel slot machines for the first time, ever. □

*John McPhee, whose work appears frequently in The New Yorker, lives in Princeton, New Jersey. He is the author of more than a dozen books, the latest of which is In Suspect Terrain, published earlier this year by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

# THE COMMON MAN'S GAMBLER

After 50 years in the casino business, Warren Nelson still has an uncommon touch.  
By Guy Shieler



A casual visitor to the main office of Reno's Club Cal-Neva would never guess it is the headquarters of one of Nevada's most consistently successful casinos. The office occupies a tiny space on the second floor. Two desks, jammed back-to-back, leave only enough room for a couple of beat-up chairs. The decor runs to Early Nondescript, as though paint left over from a more important job had been rolled onto the walls as an afterthought. A window looks out on an old iron fire escape one story above the noise of Center Street, which is a block removed from the more famous Casino Row of Virginia Street.

The man who generally occupies this cramped space is himself laid back enough to fit the environment perfectly. He is Warren Nelson, a square-jawed, blue-eyed, onetime cowboy who is operator and one of the chief owners of the Club Cal-Neva. Feeling just as comfortable in these plain surroundings as he did in the ranch house back in Montana, he sees no need for the fancy office trappings that other gaming executives favor. Nor does he see any reason for the bustling casino he runs to have a glamorous decor. Although recent expansions reflect a new plushness similar to that of its more renowned Virginia Street neighbors like Harrah's and Harolds Club, the Cal-Neva doesn't try to compete with their glitz and glitter.

It doesn't have to. Warren Nelson and his partners have become millionaires by having confidence in the common man. They insist on operating a place where the guy with a few bucks can feel at home, enjoy himself, and leave satisfied, even when he loses. It works because Cal-Neva still has the feel of the bare-floor, noisy gambling hall of the Old West, not to mention low prices for food and drink and "liberal" slot machines.

Giving more attention to the average player than to high rollers (who are always welcome, however) has carried the Cal-Neva through the recent recession—the first Nevada has experienced in a half-century of legalized gambling—as if it were a boom. In 1981, while some casinos struggled just to survive, and some didn't, the Cal-Neva grossed more than it ever had before. In 1982 it did even better. And so in 1983, it has been involved in a three-story, 15,000-square foot addition to the main casino.

In view of all that, Nelson says with understandable confidence, "I think it's the best gambling house in Nevada. I think it makes more money per square foot than any place else. That's a pretty broad statement, I know. But I believe it's true."

What's the secret? Bill Thornton, a partner in the Cal-Neva, agrees that the common man approach is a major factor.

"People come into gambling at a lot of different levels," he explains. "I suppose Caesars is at one end of it, where they generate their business by creating some kind of grand spectacular to be a magnet to attract a person. But Warren's approach—and the Cal-Neva's—is to figure out what the people like and what they want, then try to do the things that please them and relate to their interests. That's the gimmick, rather than, say, an elephant or a prizefight."

Nelson himself tends to spread the credit around. "The greatest thing we have here is our help. I have always given them full credit."

But Thornton thinks the club's success is due to Nelson. "He's the main guy," he says. "He's not only been around a long time; he's also quite willing to work as a mentor with younger people. I think that's why he has quite a following. It's a nice quality about him as a person as far as working with him is concerned. A lot of people who are smarter and know things others don't know, want to be mentors. It takes a lot of time, and it takes energy out of you. And you have to have a willingness to share—and some people don't want to share anything."

Even his competitors recognize Nelson as one of the "main guys" in molding the state's successful half-century of legalized gambling. They also have him to thank for bringing keno to Nevada in 1936 (see box).

Today, nearly half a century later, he is involved in another venture, Sierra Sid's Casino in Sparks, with area gaming figures Si Redd and Sid Doan.

**N**elson, the son of a Danish chef, was born in Great Falls, Montana, on January 13, 1913. His mother died when he was five, and he spent several years with his second cousins on a ranch near Hysham in southern Montana. "That was a tough town," he says, "one of those real Saturday night cowboy towns. There were shootings almost every week. We lived in a log cabin with a dirt floor, two rooms, and a little lean-to on the outside where the kids slept."

After living with his father off and on, Nelson started high school in Great Falls, but, he recalls, "I became quite a problem." He quit school after an argument with his father. Then his stepmother persuaded him to go to Carroll College, which had a high school curriculum. Summers he spent back home as a bellhop, starting when he was 14, at a hotel where his father worked. It was a fascinating job for a kid during the Roaring Twenties, when bootlegging was illegal but widespread. "I learned an awful lot," Nelson says today. "In fact, I even began selling whiskey. Everybody did it, so it seemed like the thing to do."

The Depression changed many things, including Warren's income as a bellhop, which dropped from \$100 to \$14 a day. He was 18 then and about to experience his first contact with gambling. His father and a partner had opened a small restaurant in Great Falls, and hard times made it impera-

tive that they find something special to attract customers. Nelson senior had heard of a man in Butte who had a game called Chinese Lottery and sent for him to set up the game in his restaurant. The name was changed to keno, and young Warren Nelson got a job working the game for \$5 a day. The more he got involved, the more fascinated he became with keno. But he quickly recognized that its complex mathematics would require some heavy study if he were to master the game.

Nelson knew just the person to give him that special instruction. "He was Father Rooney, a Catholic priest and assistant president at Carroll College," Nelson recalls. "He had a reputation as one of the world's best mathematicians. So I went to Helena and told him about the game and what I wanted to learn."

Not only did Father Rooney understand it immediately; he lived up to his reputation by pinpointing the formulas that made it work. That was enough to spark young Nelson into an intensive study.

"This was before calculators, and even before adding machines," Nelson explains. "So I took a roll of butcher's paper and put it on the floor and started working out those formulas. Some nights I would go from one end of the room to the other on my belly, moving backwards, figuring and figuring. It was a great experience and I think it had a lot to do with my success in the gambling business. I got a great understanding of numbers from it. That's very important."

Nelson grew tired, however, of the on-again, off-again nature of the gambling business, which was illegal, so he took a job

in the county assessor's office. Then he decided he himself ought to be assessor. "I thought it was a good idea to be a big shot. I put up \$30 to file, although my father sort of tried to dissuade me." But a political leader told him that if he wanted to win, he would have to fire a man who worked in the assessor's office. Nelson was instantly disenchanted with political life.

"Only two days later," he remembers, "I got a phone call from a guy in Reno asking if I wanted to come down and open a keno game for a man named Francis Lyden. With no hesitation I said, 'Yes. When do you want me to be there?' The man said, 'Tomorrow,' and asked if I could bring a crew. I said I could, and he told me he could use four. I told him we'd be there as soon as we could get a bus."

"The first thing I did was tell my dad what I was going to do. He asked me if I was sure, and I told him I was, positively, that I didn't want to be county assessor, or have anything to do with the political end of it."

"He was just great. He said to me, 'Well, kid, maybe you're right. I'd rather have you be an honest gambler than a crooked politician, anyway.'"

Becoming an honest gambler included getting the confidence of people who were anything but honest, and Warren Nelson had a knack for doing just that. "I think my reputation, even when I was 23 or 24, was that if somebody told me something, I wouldn't talk about it a lot. People used to tell me things about how they cheated in gambling that they wouldn't tell anybody else. If somebody made a score and just had to tell somebody about it because they were so proud of it, they would tell me because they were sure I wouldn't say anything. I always wanted to know how they did it and when they would do it. I'd have them come in the back room and show me how they cheated, if they did it with cards or dice."

"I never tried to do these things myself, but I talked to all these people who were so good at it. And because they would show me, I became pretty much of an expert in that part of the gaming business. I could spot the people who were dealing seconds, people who were switching dice, people who were fixing roulette wheels. There were some fantastically great ways that they would take the ball off a wheel and make it drop into the number they wanted it to. I saw all these things."

Nelson regarded his sources with respect. "My curiosity led me to make friends with most of these people. There wasn't any one of them I didn't learn something from. Most of them would cheat you or beat you almost any way they could. But if they told you they would do something for you, they would do it. It's a cliché to say their word was their bond, but it was—if they trusted you."

**W**hen Nelson arrived in Reno in 1936, gambling had been legal in Nevada for only five years. The three outstanding gambling houses in town were the Palace Club, Harolds Club, and the Bank Club. None was large by today's standards. "Everybody laughed at Harolds,"

## It Was Just the Ticket

Even though the game of keno, long called Chinese Lottery, was one of the oldest gambling games in the world (laborers who built the Great Wall of China played it in 246 B.C.), many Nevada gamblers in the 1930s had never heard of it. The game might have never appeared in Nevada at all except for the brash 23-year-old Montanan who blew into Reno in 1936, five years after casino gambling was legalized. Today, Warren Nelson still boasts, "I opened the first keno game in Nevada. It was the first time any white man anywhere had run a keno game."

It wasn't easy, either. The local operators were cautious about accepting new ideas. But John Petricciani, one of the owners of Reno's Palace Club, let Nelson give it a try.

The winner's limit was then \$2,000 per game, which Nelson figured was safe enough. "But the third or fourth day after we started," he recalls, "an old Chinese man hit a 50-cent ticket for \$900. I almost fainted. But old Petricciani called me in and didn't flinch. He just started to give me nine \$100 bills. I asked him to give me tens instead, so it would look like more money. He did, and those bills strung out along the

counter probably looked like \$10,000 to the winner. I think that kind of psychology as much as anything else made the game go forward, because from then on it has always been up."

In Montana, where Nelson had learned to operate keno, the illegal keno games were run only once or twice a day. Nelson hadn't been at the Palace Club long before he had games every hour, but even that wasn't satisfactory. "I decided we ought to have more action, so pretty soon I started a game every half hour, then every 15 minutes, then every 10. The game became faster and faster and drew people because they liked the action."

As history shows, such moves made keno a spectacular success. The game spread rapidly as other operators lost their timidity. The winner's limit, which was \$2,000 when Nelson started it all, is \$50,000 today, and keno is an essential element in Nevada gaming. Nelson continues to take special pride in keno's popularity. "The game has grown so much," he says. "It's sort of my baby, because that's where I cut my teeth in the gambling business. I've always stayed very close to the keno game, and I always will."—GS



Reno's Cal-Neva, the way it was before Nelson & Co. took over.

Nelson says, "because they had mice in the window running electronic roulette wheels. They didn't even have a 21 table."

Nelson's first job in Reno was at the Palace Club. Its owner, John Petricciani, hired the 23-year-old at \$12 a day to open a keno game. Nelson was fascinated by the other games, too, and he learned to deal them.

"I loved to gamble," he says of those early days. "I would bet on anything, any time, and I was very lucky. Besides, I wasn't afraid to bet my money. I guess I was

supposed to learn the business that way instead of the hard way."

The Palace Club's setup was big for its time. "We had eight 21 tables, two craps, one roulette wheel, 75 or 80 slots, two faro bank games, and a keno game," he recalls. "That was considered a big gambling house in those days. Most of the play then was on the faro bank, most of the high-rolling play. There was a lot of play on the nickel slot machines, none on the quarter, halves, and dollars. It was just as well—we had to count all the coins from the machines by hand.



Warren Nelson's unpretentious office, unlikely headquarters for a gaming tycoon, is small and cluttered and has a great view of a fire escape.

There were no counting machines of any kind. And most of the slots were very tight."

At the outbreak of World War II, Nelson left the Palace and, with two friends, went to San Francisco and enlisted in the Marine Corps. "Boot camp was a terrible transition for me. I was almost 30 years old, had worked in a gambling house all of my adult life, and here I was in a platoon with 60 fellows, none over 21. I couldn't keep up with them."

He also couldn't give up his chosen profession when the opportunity arose. He was stationed in San Francisco for a time during his four-year stint and got a job dealing craps on weekends at a place in El Cerrito. "I worked it for a year, and the tips were fantastic. I'd go to work at seven at night. My Marine Corps job would be over at four [it was a desk job, in personnel classification]. I would go into a cloakroom and change from my uniform into a civilian suit that belonged to a friend of mine who outweighed me by about 30 pounds. It was a double-breasted suit, and I couldn't keep the pants up. I was pretty scared going to work, because the Marines might catch me. It was a court-martial offense to be out of uniform.

"Also, gambling wasn't exactly legal. There was always the chance of a raid. But the money was so good I had to chance it."

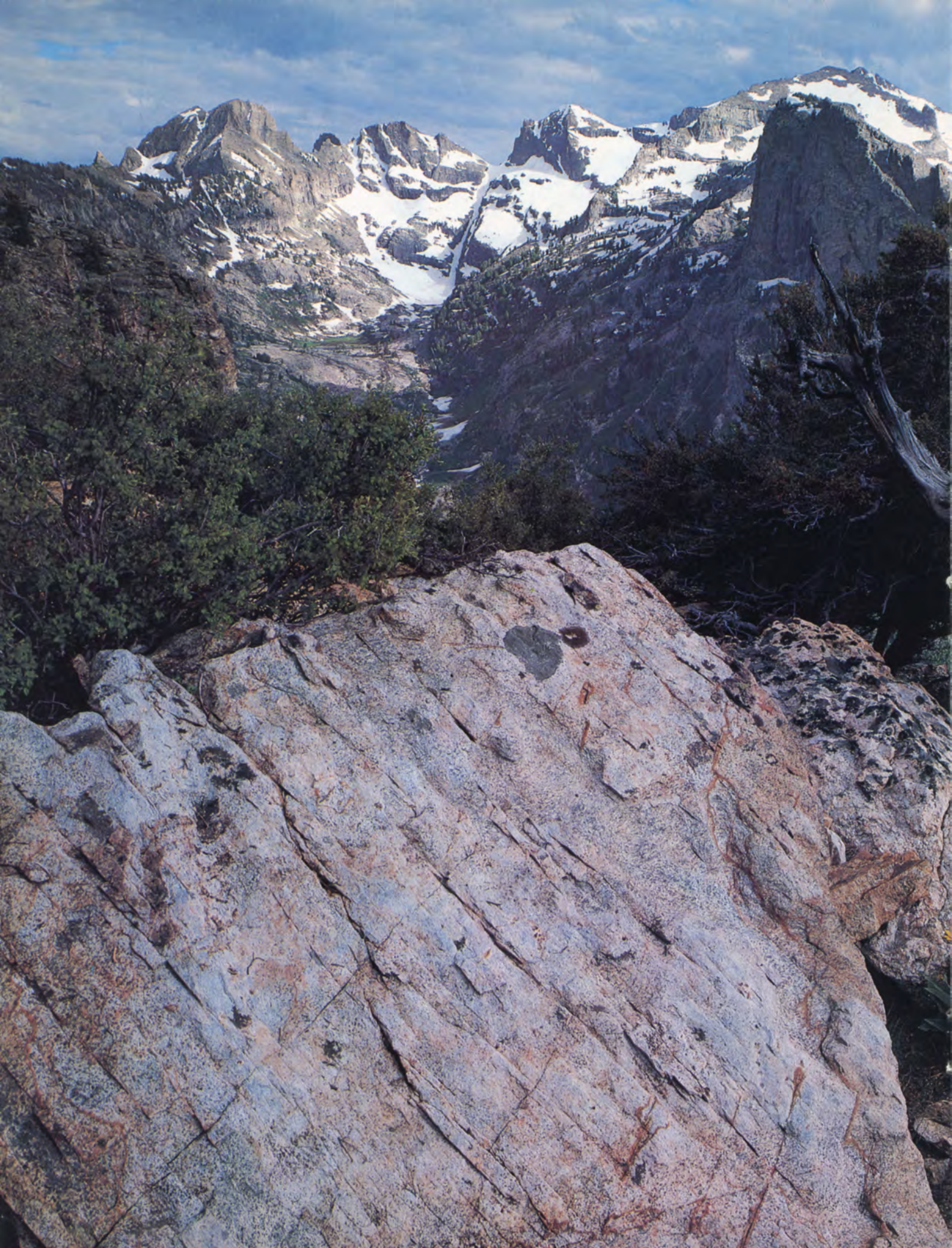
It was also a good education on how dealers can steal. "That probably gave me more insight on how to protect myself in the business than anything that ever happened before. People stole there because the guy who owned the place was so cheap—we got \$15 a day and one meal. One day an old-time dealer, noticing my loose pants that I had to keep pulling up, asked me if I was wearing a 'sub.' That's a pocket that fits under your belt in the front of your pants. It was used by crooked dealers to slip money into when nobody was looking. I think that's a good example of the old days in the gambling business and the difference between things that went on then and now."

Back in Reno at war's end, Nelson was asked by Bill Harrah to help open his new Harrah's Club. Nelson went to Los Angeles to meet Harrah and help buy equipment for the new place. But it didn't open until June of 1946, so Nelson went to work in the interim for the Bonanza Club, which was on Center Street where part of Harrah's is now.

After the new club opened, Nelson persuaded Harrah to give big credit to high rollers, assuring him that the clients eventually would lose it back to the club. Harrah went along, reluctantly, but the plan worked spectacularly, and the club made a large profit in its first year.

But Nelson didn't get the percentage he says Harrah promised him, so he quit—"without rancor," he says. He then did stints with the Waldorf Club and the Mapes Hotel. His longest job ran from 1955 through 1962—back at his original stand, the Palace Club. But he was not too happy with the operation because, among other things, he felt there were "too many partners. The slot machines were kept so tight that we never came anywhere near the potential that they would have reached if I had been able to do

(Continued on page 52)



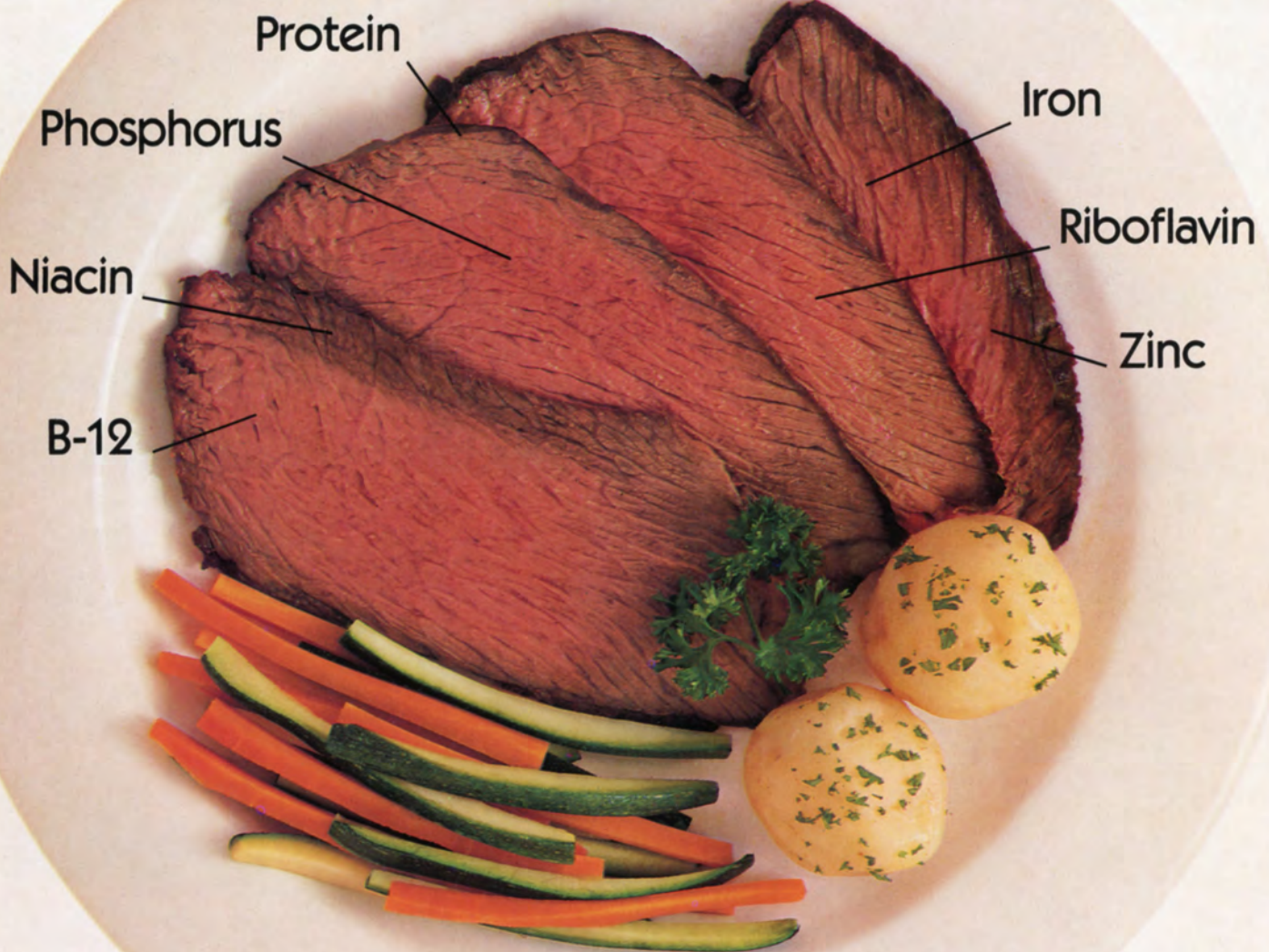


# Muench's Gallery

A bouquet of renegade wildflowers, sheltered by time-scarred granite boulders, blooms valiantly amid the raw summits of the Ruby Mountains south of Elko.

*David Muench enjoys showing what he calls "a spirit of place" in his work. Muench, one of the West's great landscape photographers, presents selections from his Nevada portfolio in each issue.*

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Source: USDA Handbook No. 456.

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ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE GROTEGUT

## PANDEMONIUM IN PALISADE

Bill Yates' funeral was the wildest in our town's history, and for good reason.

By Harry E. Webb

Palisade, Nevada, witnessed a few queer funerals in its hectic days, but we'll bet dollars to donuts none ever equaled that of our beloved Bill Yates. Bill had been one of our Pine Valley ranchers, so ranchers from all directions joined the Palisaders in paying their last respects to the departed and crowded into the big new schoolhouse until it was overflowing. Because our town had no church, the school was occasionally used for funerals and dances. The doors had been left open, it being a beautiful, balmy spring day.

The funeral was odd from the start. Bill had been a high Mason, and yet none of his neighbors knew about it, so the whole proceedings were foreign to us. But that's beside the point.

The head of the white-aproned pallbearers had no sooner begun a lengthy

eulogy when a squalling cat followed by a small bulldog slithered across the polished floor, and some rancher yelled, "Look out, that cat's probably rabid!" Rabies was so prevalent those days that mere mention of it put the fear of death in most people. The cat then sought shelter among the banks of flowers, which made capturing and getting the dog out quite an upsetting chore.

However, no sooner had the dog been booted elsewhere and tranquility restored than the master's eulogy was again abruptly halted. It appeared the bulldog had rounded up every pooch in town and led the parade that noisily left their "calling cards" well distributed among the flowers. I guess we all thought it best to keep quiet, so we sat motionless. Perhaps no further damage would have been done if the little bulldog hadn't flushed out the hiding cat, but when

he did, pandemonium broke loose.

Mingling with the barking of dogs came Bill Hammond's yell of "Keep that damned door shut! We've put the same damn dogs out a dozen times!" Bill was top hand at the Yates Ranch, and I guess he wanted a semblance of respect shown his old boss.

When the bedlam had died down to where a word could be understood, Clarinda Meraldi and Emmie Hawkins rendered "Going Home," and the Masonic master mumbled through some secret doctrine that no one but the Masons there could understand. Then the six white aprons were removed and placed in the casket.

The service over, a Palisader's voice asserted itself: "Well, I reckon all's left to do is get Bill to hell up on the hill and call it a day. If we stick around here trouble in some form is sure to pop up." Palisaders seldom referred to the burial spot as a cemetery. So the cortege of cars and people on foot wound their way up the winding path to the "hill," which wasn't a hill but a gradual slope to the high cliffs.

We were gathered around the mound of brown dirt, which already had a few wildflowers placed on it by the Indian women who never, if possible, failed showing their feelings in this manner. Suddenly Mrs. Meraldi gave a piercing scream of "Crickets!" and headed for her car. "Now," someone said, "what struck her? She gone batty?" Not quite, for then we saw an army of huge crickets advancing down the hill through the dilapidated fence, and further screams and shouts sent folks hurrying to their cars where a second bedlam was enacted as drivers tried to turn around. A general exodus was taking place as folks ran or drove pell-mell homeward to close windows and doors.

When crickets choose to feed, every edible plant disappears, and so it was with the banks of flowers that had been tossed from a departing pickup, and it was only through sheer luck that the casket had been lowered and the box closed before the crickets sent folks running. "Looks like it's up to you and me," Nat Hawkins, the town marshal, said, "to try and fill in the holes."

So between chasing crickets off our shirt collars and faces, we lit in shoveling with crickets tumbling in the hole with equal amounts of earth. Halfway through our job Nat said, "I can't take any more of this, so I'll come back later." I was in full agreement and left with him in his car. With a few hundred crickets as passengers, we beat the main horde into town. "If this hasn't been one hell of a funeral," Nat said, "I never saw one like this!"

As an encore for the day's tragi-comedy, whenever a couple of barroom customers argue over the date of Bill Yates' funeral, it is usually settled by figuring when all eastbound trains were stalled by the crickets, and locomotive drivers burned pockets in the rails "because there wasn't sand enough between here 'n hell to put grit on the rails!" □

Harry E. Webb, who once rode with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, has been a cowboy, trapper, actor, and author. He recently was named to the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

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## NELSON (Continued from page 47)

some of the things I wanted to do. A loose percentage for the player is essential, and everybody in the business who is doing any good at all now has learned that."

In 1962 the Club Cal-Neva had been closed for two years and had physically disintegrated. With several partners—including Jack Douglass, Leon Nightingale, and Howard Farris—Warren Nelson decided to put it back into business. "I put on a pair of overalls and went to work cleaning it up and changing it around. That took about two months, and it didn't reopen until April 1, 1962. I had my fingers crossed because I started the project with an investment of \$20,000, a lot of money to me then. But I would have to say that was one of the greatest parlays that's ever been made as far as I am personally concerned."

It was indeed. In its first year, the Cal-Neva made \$210,000, by the third it hit \$500,000, and it's gone up from there ever after. Nelson says that this is proof that success comes not by trying to take every cent the players have, but by selling entertainment. "Nowadays more and more people gamble for fun," he says. "I figure the average person loses \$5 an hour. If you're playing and having fun, and your average cost is \$5 an hour, that's not expensive. Many other things cost more than that. I look at gambling as an entertainment feature—not a life-and-death thing for somebody trying to win a jillion dollars."

Although in the process of this "entertainment" project Nelson seems to be making a jillion dollars for himself, he has still had time to become almost as active as a community leader as he is in the gaming industry. Locally, he is chairman of the board of Old College, a recently-formed Reno institution. Nelson has long been active in the Boys Club and is now on its board of directors. There is a raft of other things: He is on the board of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; on the national board of the Jewish Hospital; on the board of directors of his alma mater, Carroll College, and its national money raiser; and active in the Ford Foundation's drive to raise money to restore Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.

To Warren Nelson, such endeavors are an obligation. "These things that I've done, especially in the last 10 years, have given me a lot of satisfaction—although they were a lot of work. I have tried to be a leader, especially for the gambling business, to show what I thought it was and what it should be." And he is proud of what that business does for the community: "The amazing thing is that the gambling industry, despite all you hear about it, does more in the way of charity and helping local entities than any other form of business."

One gambler who has done many good deeds is Warren Nelson. For that reason he has the respect of the community, a feeling matched by his peers. □

*Guy Shieler of Carson City, TIME/LIFE correspondent and Nevada contributor, says his office is a little smaller than Warren Nelson's but just as cluttered.*

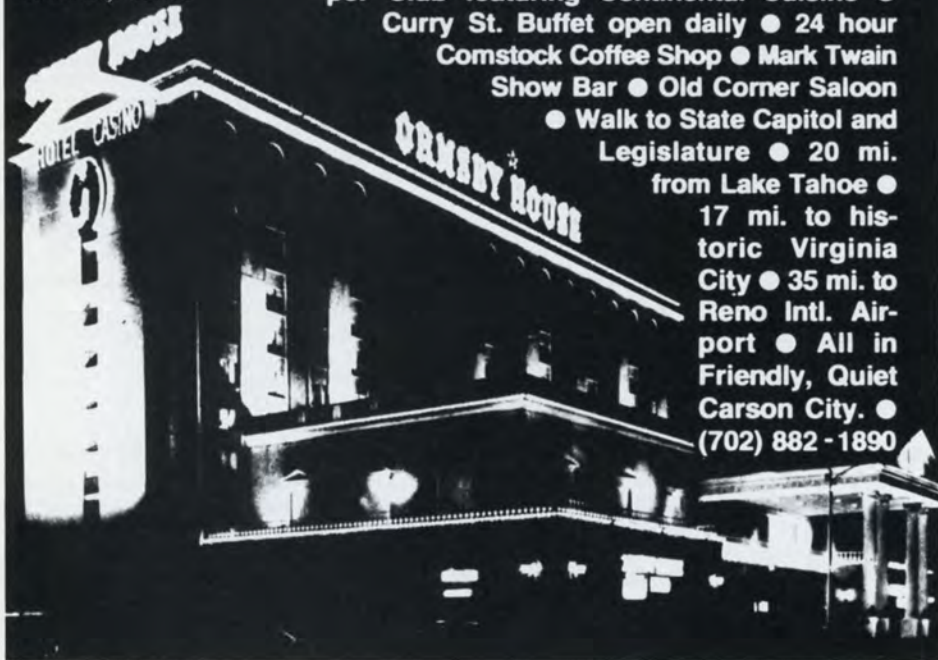


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# Showguide



DAVID BROWN

Visitors and homefolks are tuned in to the bedlam Nevada casinos dish up every New Year's Eve, but the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are also full of good cheer. Traditional holiday menus include ham, turkey, and pheasant, and you'll find other bargains in December room rates as hotels gear up for the holiday slack. Some casinos offer special yuletide entertainment. Look for Christmas classics like the "Nutcracker" ballet on December 22-23 at Caesars Tahoe and the Las Vegas Symphony's concerts December 10-11 in the Tropicana showroom. And, as usual, the annual New Year's bashes will be frantic with street dances, showroom parties, and fireworks.

## Shows & Stars

Following is a muster of the stars, revues, and extravaganzas you can see in Nevada showrooms in November and December. Schedules can change, so it's wise to call ahead for times, dates, and reservations. For out-of-state callers, Nevada's area code is 702.

## Las Vegas

**Aladdin**, 736-0111 Entertainment TBA

**Barbary Coast**, 737-7111 Irish Showband, 9:30pm, midnight & 2am; Royal Dixie Jazz Band, noon-6pm; no cover, no minimum

**Bingo Palace**, 876-8223: Hired Hands, indf., 8pm-2am Tues.-Sun., Rose & Pike, indf., 8pm-2am Mon.

**Caesars Palace**, 731-7333: Joan Rivers, 11/1-3;

Paul Anka/Susan Anton, 11/4-18; Wayne Newton, 11/19-12/4 & 12/29-1/18

**Circus Circus**, 734-0410: Circus acts, 11am-midnight, free

**Desert Inn**, 733-4566: "Dream Street," indf.; cocktail shows 8pm & midnight

**Dunes**, 737-4110: Entertainment TBA

**El Rancho**, 796-2222: Lounge entertainment nightly, 1 drink minimum

**Flamingo Hilton**, 733-3333: City Lites, revue, indf.; 8pm dinner show from \$14.50, midnight cocktail show \$6.95, includes 2 drinks

**Four Queens**, 385-4011 Dondino, indf., 1-5pm Tues.-Sun., Louis Prima's Witnesses, thru 12/31 5:30-9:30pm Mon.-Sat.

**Frontier**, 734-0240: Siegfried and Roy in Beyond Belief, thru 11/28; & 12/27-indf., 7pm & 11pm on Tues.-Sun., family show on 11/25 & 12/30 at 6pm; dark Mon., \$26.50

**Fremont**, 385-3232: Lavendar Follies '83, indf., 8pm & 10pm Mon.-Thurs., 8pm, 10pm & midnight Fri.-Sat., dark Sun., \$8.95, includes 2 drinks

**Hacienda**, 739-8911 Fire & Ice, ice spectacular, indf.; 8pm optional dinner show from \$13.95, 8pm & midnight cocktail show \$9.95, Tues.-Sun., Redd Foxx, indf.; 10pm Tues.-Sun., 1:30am Fri.-Sat., \$14.95, includes 2 drinks

**Holiday**, 369-5000: Wild World of Burlesque, indf., 10pm & 12:30am Mon.-Fri., 8pm, 10pm & 12:30am Sat., dark Sun., \$6.95, includes 2 drinks

**Imperial Palace**, 733-0234: Legends in Concert, indf., 8pm & 11pm; dark Sun., \$6.95, includes 2 drinks

**Landmark**, 733-1110: Nightly entertainment

**Las Vegas Hilton**, 732-5755: Bal du Moulin Rouge starring Charo, thru 12/13, Suzanne Somers, 12/14-indf.; 8pm dinner show from \$16.50, midnight cocktail show \$12.50

**Las Vegas Inn & Casino**, 731-3222: Entertainment Tues.-Sun.

**MGM Grand Hotel**, 739-4567: Ziegfeld Theatre: Jubilee! indf., 8:15pm & 11:45pm, \$23.50; *Celebrity Room*: Julio Iglesias, thru 11/2; Rich Little, 11/3-16; Oak Ridge Boys/Lee Greenwood, 11/24-30; Engelbert Humperdinck, 12/1-10

**Marina**, 739-1500: Treniers, 11/2-27 & 12/28-1/23; 8pm and 10pm Sun.-Mon. & Wed.-Thurs., 8pm, 10pm & midnight Fri.-Sat. cocktail shows; dark Tues., no cover, 2 drink minimum

**Maxim**, 731-4300: The Bobby Duck Show with the Shameless Hussies and Frank Link, indf., 8pm & 10pm Tues.-Thurs., 8pm, 10pm & midnight Fri., Sat., & Mon., dark Sun., \$6.95, includes 2 drinks; Talent Showcase on Sun., 8:30pm-2am

**Mint**, 385-7440: Entertainment TBA

**Riviera**, 734-5110: Ronnie Milsap, thru 11/2; Shirley MacLaine, 11/3-16; Neil Sedaka, 11/17-23; Larry Gatlin & the Gatlin Brothers/Roger Miller, 11/25-12/7; Shirley MacLaine, 12/29-1/11 8pm & midnight

**Royal Casino**, 733-4000: Grin & Bare It, indf., 8pm, 10pm & midnight, \$3.95 for show only, \$9.95 dinner & show

**Sahara**, 737-2424: Headliner entertainment

**Sam's Town**, 456-7777: Nightly entertainment; call 454-8060 for Sam's Town outdoor concerts with David St. David & The Prophets, Bellamy Brothers, Charly McClaine, Gene Watson, 11/4; David St. David & The Prophets, Bobby Rydell, Bobby Zee, Johnny Tillotson, Tommy Roe, AR & Rockin' Ricochettes, 11/5; 8pm Fri., 7:30pm Sat., \$12, \$14

**Sands**, 733-5453: Gallagher, 11/1-6 & 11/22-27; Wayland Flowers & Madame, 11/29-12/11 8pm & 11pm cocktail shows

**Showboat**, 385-9123: Entertainment and dancing nightly

**Silver Slipper**, 734-1212: Boy-Lesque, revue, indf.; 8pm, 10pm & midnight; dark Thurs., Branded, revue, indf., 9pm & 11pm Mon.-Thurs., 7pm, 9pm & 11pm Fri. & Sat., dark Sun., \$5.95

(Continued on next page)

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**Stardust**, 732-6325: Lido de Paris, indf.; 7pm & 11pm Sun.-Fri., 6:15pm family show, children 11 and under \$12.50, 9:15pm & midnight Sat.; \$17.50, includes 2 drinks

**Sundance**, 382-6111 Entertainment nightly

**Tropicana**, 739-2411 Folies Bergere, indf.; 8pm dinner show from \$16.95, 11:30pm cocktail show \$13.95

**Union Plaza**, 386-2444: "Sugar," Broadway musical, indf.; 8pm dinner show from \$9.95, 11:45pm cocktail show \$5.95, includes 2 drinks

## Lake Tahoe

**Caesars Tahoe**, 588-3515 (800-648-7469): Julio Iglesias, 11/4-5; Johnny Mathis, 11/23-26

**Cloud's Cal-Neva**, 832-4000: Cabaret entertainment and dancing to "top 40" music Tues.-Sun., no cover

**Harrah's Lake Tahoe**, 588-6611: *South Shore Room*: Wayne Newton, thru 11/17; Captain & Tennille/The Smothers Brothers, 11/18-24; Peter, Paul & Mary, 11/25-29; Sammy Davis Jr. 12/2-6 & 12/9-15; Mac Davis, 12/23-1/1 *Stateline Cabaret*: Paul Revere & The Raiders, thru 11/6 (except Mon.); John Kay & Steppenwolf, 11/8-13; The Platters, 11/15-20; Joe Savage, 11/22-12/11 (except Mon.); The Association, 12/13-18; Tower of Power, 12/20-25; Paul Revere & The Raiders, 12/27-1/8 (except Mon.)

**Harvey's**, 588-2411 *Top Of The Wheel*: Ron Rose Sound, indf.; Garfin Gathering, 11/1-13; Fortune, 11/15-12/4; Tamra Steele Band, 12/6-25; Fortune, 12/27-1/22; *Casino Theatre Lounge*: Edell Anglin, indf., Sun Spots/Billy Armstrong, 11/1-13; Lou

Marek's Rainbow Express/Jonas, 11/14-27; Links, 11/21-12/11; Right Touch, 12/5-25; Silverwing, 12/12-25; Tunes Plus One, 12/19-1/8; Freddie Bell, featuring Patti York, 12/27-1/22; *Harvey's Inn Casino Lounge*: Network, 11/1-6

**Hyatt Lake Tahoe**, 831-1111 TKO, thru 11/6; Motifs, 11/8-20; Jay Ramsey Band, 11/22-27; Eddie Cash, 11/29-12/11 Garfin Gathering, 12/13-1/1

**Nevada Lodge**, 831-0660: Nightly entertainment

**Sahara Tahoe**, 588-6211 (800-648-3322): Sidro's Armada, thru 11/6; Frenz, thru 11/27; Gene Ferrari, 11/7-27; Jay Ramsey Band, 11/28-12/11; Danny Marona, 11/28-12/18; Pat Collins, 12/12-1/1; Gaylord & Holiday, 12/19-1/8; Williams & Ree, 12/26-1/8

## Reno, Sparks & Carson City

**Carson City Nugget**, 882-1626: The Lelands, 11/1-20; Motifs, 11/22-1/1

**Circus Circus**, 329-0711 Circus acts, 11am-midnight, free

**Fitzgerald's**, 786-3663: *Emerald Room*: Westport Junction, thru 11/13; Four Tunes Plus One, 11/15-12/4; Glenna Allen, 12/6-25; Ink Spots, 12/27-1/15; *Cabaret*: Chris David, 11/1-20; Custer's Last Band, 11/2-21; Cathy O'Shea, 11/22-12/11; Winchester Cathedral, 12/12-1/1; Stan Galli, 12/21-1/8

**Harrah's Reno**, 329-4422: *Headliner Room*: Don Rickles, thru 11/2; Debbie Reynolds/Rip Taylor, 11/3-9; Tony Orlando, 11/10-23; Mickey Gilley, 11/24-12/7; Bill Cosby/Clint Holmes, 12/8-21

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# NEVADA 84

Subjects: anything in Nevada ghost towns, buildings, people, industry, landscapes, nature, contemporary communities, potpourri.

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Deadline for receipt of entries in Elko is January 14, 1984.

Charo, 12/22-1/4; *Casino Cabaret*: Rain, A Tribute to The Beatles, thru 11/6 (except Mon.); The Platters, 11/8-13; John Kay & Steppenwolf, 11/15-27 (except Mon.); Paul Revere & The Raiders, 11/29-12/11 (except Mon.); B. B. King, 12/13-25 (except Mon.); The Mamas and The Papas, 12/27-1/8 (except Mon.)

**MGM Grand Hotel**, 789-2285 (800-648-3568); *Ziegfeld Theatre*: Hello Hollywood Hello, indf.; *Lion's Den*: Super Gold/Sizzle, thru 11/8; Miss Pat Collins, The Hip Hypnotist/Chazz, 11/9-12/6; Gary Raffanelli & Sandy Selby, 12/7-1/10

**John Ascuaga's Nugget**, Sparks, 358-2233 (800-648-1177); *Celebrity Room*: "Fiddler on the Roof," Broadway musical, 11/3, 11/5-6, 11/12-13, 11/19-20, 11/24, and 11/26-27 tickets from \$5 to \$20; *Cabaret*: Zella Lehr/Jam Ramsey Band, 11/1-13; Chris David/Wright Brothers, 11/15-12/4

**Onslow**, 786-7310: Nightly entertainment

**Ormsby House**, Carson City, 882-1890: *Mark Twain Bar*: Sundance, 11/1-13; *Supper Club*: Two of Clubs, 11/1-27

**Peppermill**, 826-2121 Tony Saxon, 10/31-11/20; Buckboard, 11/1-6; The Shopte, 11/8-20; Buckboard, 11/21-27; Lelands, 11/21-27; Spring Fever, 11/29-12/18; Jerry Sun, 12/20-1/1

**Reno Hilton**, 785-7100: *Opera House Theatre*: Razzle Dazzle, indf., 8pm & 11:30pm cocktail shows Tues.-Sat., 4:30pm family show Sun.; dark Mon., *Rainbow Cabaret*: Dae Han Sisters, thru 11/13; Angel Fever, thru 11/14; Sonny Turner, 11/29-1/2; Jerry Sun's Fantasy (The Perfect 10), 11/15-28; Reycards, 11/29-1/2

**Reno Ramada**, 788-2000: Nightly entertainment

**Riverside**, 786-4400: Dancing to records of the '40s, '50s & '60s, Tues.-Sun., no minimum

**Shy Clown**, 358-6632: Nightly entertainment

## Rural

**Elko**: Commercial Hotel, 738-3181 and Stockmen's Hotel, 738-5141 Red Lion Inn & Casino, 738-2111

**Ely**: Hotel Nevada, 289-4414

**Fallon**: Fallon Nugget, 423-3111

**Gardnerville**: Sharkey's, 782-3133

**Hawthorne**: El Capitan, 945-3322

**Jackpot**: Cactus Pete's, 755-2321 and Horse-shu Casino, 755-2331

**Laughlin**: Riverside Resort, 298-2535; Del Webb's Nevada Club, 298-2512; Regency Casino, 298-2439; Edgewater Hotel & Casino, 298-2453; The Colorado Belle, 298-2425

**Mesquite**: Peppermill's Western Village, 346-5232

**Tonopah**: Mizpah Hotel, 482-6202; Station House, 482-9777

**Topaz Lake**: Li Brandi's, 266-3321 and Topaz Lodge, 266-3339

**Wendover**: Goldrush Casino; 664-2255; Nevada Crossing, 664-4000; Stalene Casino, 664-2221 Red Garter Casino, 664-2111

**Winnemucca**: Star Hotel & Casino and Winners Hotel-Casino, 623-2511

**Yerington**: Casino West, 463-2481 and Lucky Club, 463-2868

All dates, performers and prices are subject to change. At press time, some casinos had not completed November and December bookings, so we recommend calling ahead to confirm entertainment schedules. □

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# The Nevada Bookshelf

Camels, lists, and Indian lore. By Roger Smith

**Camels in Nevada**, by Douglas McDonald. Nevada Publications, Box 15444, Las Vegas, NV. 89114. \$2.95, 32 pages, soft cover.

With illustrations as well as text, this monograph covers the brief period in the 1800s when camels were common fixtures on the state's roads. First imported in 1861, camels

of both the one- and two-hump variety hauled freight, firewood, salt, and coal to Virginia City, Austin, Belmont, Silver Bow, and other Nevada mining camps. They might have been cost effective in the transportation business but numerous factors, including their unfortunate penchant

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for causing horses and mules to stampede, led to their being declared *persona non grata* by the state legislature. The book includes the only known photo of a camel in Nevada in the 1800s.

In all, this 32-page volume packs a lot of history about one of Nevada's least known freight animals, as well as covering the beginning of modern camel racing in this state.

**Touring Nevada: A Historic and Scenic Guide**, by Mary Ellen and Al Glass. University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV. 89557. \$7.95, 253 pages, paperback.

This guidebook divides the state into seven regions and for each provides historical sketches, descriptive itineraries for as many as five one-day motor tours (and some side trips), and route maps. Color and black-and-white photographs show scenic and historical points of interest. Separate essays discuss the best places to eat, the nature of Nevada's gambling industry, and how Nevada place names ought to be pronounced. The book is a practical, entertaining guide to road adventures in all Nevada settings—from the Las Vegas Strip to the remotest mountain ghost towns.

**Indian Paint Brush**, by Edna B. Patterson. Art City Publishing Co., Springville, UT. 84663. \$16, 143 pages, hard cover.

In 1927 Edna Patterson came to Lamoille, Nevada, 20 miles south of Elko, as a school teacher. She soon settled in to a ranching life, became interested in local history, and wrote numerous articles and books about northeastern Nevada. *Indian Paint Brush* is her memoir of ranch life and her contact with the Shoshone and Paiute Indians who worked at the ranch as servants and harvesters. Most of the book consists of anecdotes about individual Indians, but Patterson also includes a section devoted to stories that Indians told her. Some of the stories belong to Indian myth, and some are modern. For instance, the name "Beowawe," always an object of jocular speculation, means "a woman having a baby," according to one story. More than 45 photographs of Indians and northeastern Nevada scenery adorn the text.

**Fearful Crossings: The Central Overland Trail through Nevada**, by Harold Curran. Great Basin Press, Box 11162, Reno, NV. 89510. \$12, 212 pages, paperback.

*Fearful Crossing* describes, maps out, provides illustrations for, and documents the Nevada routes used by explorers and emigrants traveling to California, beginning with Jediah Smith's crossing of Southern Nevada and concentrating on the wagon train trails of the 1840s and '50s. More than 110 maps, photographs, and drawings accompany the descriptions of natural and man-caused problems along the trail. Frequent quotations from emigrant diaries and explorers' journals show dramatically how desperate the travelers often became on Nevada's deserts and how often they had to abandon belongings, cattle, and even the bodies of those who had died. A comprehensive bibliography of secondary sources and documents follows the text. □

# Las Vegas



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# The Oddsmakers

For bookmakers and sports bettors in Las Vegas, every game is big business.

By A. D. Hopkins

It's mid-afternoon in the Churchill Downs Sports Book. Sunlight streams in the windows, facing westward across the Las Vegas Strip, catching the cigarette smoke drifting in its beams. The linoleum floor is waxed and clean, but littered with paper. It looks like a schoolroom, with plastic writing-arm chairs all facing the blackboards. But the equations on this board add up to something more exciting than apples and oranges: they're the point-spread numbers in the first football games of the 1983 season.

And the students here are studying just as hard as their juvenile counterparts. Middle-aged men in \$500 sports coats and diamond rings stand in serious conversation, their faces six inches from young Brooklynites in ill-chosen polyester knit shirts and khaki trousers. Distinctions of class and wealth are set aside in this democracy of common interest. A woman walks in to place a bet. She's a young blonde who could qualify as a *Playboy* centerfold, but the murmur concerning injuries, point spreads, and revenge factors barely pauses. Girl-

watching may be fun, but sports are serious business.

"When football season really starts you won't be able to find a seat in this place," says Frank Hall, manager of the sports book. "Some people practically live here." Indeed, a player need not leave the place until he has to sleep. There's a delicatessen counter in the corner. There's a soft-drink machine, and beside it a shoeshine stand, the man who runs it popping his rag softly.

Las Vegas is one of the few places in America where people can gather openly in

*Sonny Reizner captured national headlines by posting a line on the question of who shot J.R. Ewing on the prime-time soap opera 'Dallas.' He says, 'It was fun, I had lines on people who weren't even on the show, like Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys. And people would put a dollar or two on those people just for laughs.'*

an atmosphere completely designed for the sports bettor. And sports betting is one of the fastest-growing segments of the gaming industry. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1977, bettors put up \$103.9 million in Nevada sports books. Five years later the "handle" had grown to \$385 million. The money won by books, before expenses, grew from \$3.8 million to \$12.8 million. In 1977 there were 17 licensed race and sports books in Nevada; today there are 27 in Clark County alone.

Before 1975, Nevada gaming regulations prohibited sports books in casinos. Today, the biggest and most luxurious books are found within whooping distance of the craps pits at carpet joints like Caesars Palace, the Barbary Coast, and the El Rancho. The Stardust Hotel spent \$2.5 million on its book before taking the first bet in 1975. The Stardust's sports book seats 252 customers, who can watch games on oversized television screens served by one of the largest satellite-receiving antennas made. As many as 12 events can be received at one time. The 22-foot-high odds board can be read from 120 feet away.

All that money is not being bet by locals, who once constituted the cream of the bookmaking business. "Because of the better television coverage you have today, everybody in the country, it seems like, bets on football," Hall says. "People drive up from California every weekend just to make their football bets. Big bettors will come even farther. A lot come from Texas. I have seen them come from New York."

He explains: "You might be able to bet big money with an illegal bookmaker in any part of the country. But getting paid is another story, so they come here, where they know they can collect." While federal laws require that the bettor actually be in Nevada to bet at a Nevada book, he doesn't have to be here to win. "A lot of people place a bet on Monday or Tuesday for the weekend's game, go home, and collect by mail," Hall says.

Bookmakers do not try to make money by winning bets made by customers, but by collecting "vigorish" on each bet. On football or basketball, the player must bet \$11 to win \$10 at any book in Las Vegas. (In illegal books elsewhere the ratio is often a stiffer \$6 to \$5.) The bookmaker's idea is to win half the bets, use the book's winnings to pay the customers who won, and pay the overhead out of the vigorish money.

But to do that the bookmaker needs about half the money bet with him to be on each side of a given game. Since two opposing teams are rarely equal in their popularity with bettors, "point spreads"

are used to make the less popular teams more attractive. The book stipulates that the favorite must win by a certain number of points for the bettor backing that team to win his bet.

Thus the famous "Las Vegas Line" of point spreads is not really so much a description of a team's true chances of winning as a marketing technique to divide the betting public down the middle. Therefore every week's line has a number of good risks and an equal number of poor ones. That's what makes sports betting one of the most attractive forms of gambling, because the bettor who can tell which is which really can beat the game.

Each Sunday, after most of the weekend's games have been played, several oddsmakers—who strive to remain anonymous—create betting lines for the following week's games. A few respected bettors, mostly professionals, are allowed to bet privately against each "outlaw line" that same day. "You do that to flatten the line," says one source. "If everybody betting into the outlaw line wants to be on the same team in a given game, then the point spread on that game is wrong. By only letting a few of them bet that first line, you get to correct it without getting hurt too badly."

The prices available to the public in legal books reflect the experience of the outlaw line. Bill Dark, owner of the DelMar Race and Sports Book in North Las Vegas, says, "We don't take our numbers directly from the outlaw line, but you hear what happened on it, and you certainly don't ignore it."

Dark is one of the first bookmakers to post a complete line, usually at 8 a.m. every Monday. The Stardust and Gary Austin's, on the Strip, are almost as prompt. Others may wait until Tuesday to see if the three trailblazers get avalanched with one-sided money.

The fact that Dark has survived 20 years as a bookmaker in the same location indicates his spreads are usually correct. Representatives of other bookmakers are often sitting in his book taking notes when the prices are posted on Monday morning. "One place will respect another, and if my price is different from the one somebody else is about to post, he'll take another look at that game. If he decides I'm right, he'll move his own figure.

"As people bet into my prices I may make alterations," Dark explains. "If a lot of money is bet on one side, I may move the price to attract more money to the other side. If it is smart money—somebody like Lem Banker—I may move the price more

than I would if it's somebody I don't know betting. I'll figure he knows something I don't."

In fact, Dark says, some of the most respected (and watched) bettors place their bets through proxies unknown to the bookmakers. The proxies, or "beards," disguise the bettors' true identities.

As the week progresses, other bookmakers alter their point spreads to make their books balance. Thus the prices they offer may vary a point or two. "So my advice to any bettor is that if you like a game, go to several places—three, four, or even five—and get the best spread that favors you," says Bill Dark. Each bet is paid according to the point spread posted when the bet was made.

Meanwhile, professional handicappers like Mike Lee of Las Vegas are making their own calculations. Lee, who runs a sports information service, says, "The difference is that a handicapper's line says exactly what a team should win by. What we are really doing is looking for holes in the bookmakers' line, trying to find places where their numbers are out of line with the real chances.

"The average person is a 'favorite' bettor," Lee says. Consequently, a bookmaker may be forced to widen the point spread, creating a situation in which the underdog is a very good bet. Lee gives an example: "Penn State is playing Nebraska on a neutral field. The opening number is Nebraska minus four, meaning Nebraska is favored by four. Some people are betting on Nebraska because Penn State beat them last year and Nebraska will be looking for revenge. Others bet it simply because it is a very public team; Nebraska gets a lot of press. So there is an avalanche of money on Nebraska, and the points are going to four, four-and-a-half, on up to six in some parts of the country. By game time it could be as high as seven. When that happens a lot of people will pounce on Penn State. What they are trying to do is get some money on Penn State, and once the bookmakers get it, the points might come down."

The ordinary patron, however, does not know what the point change means. It could be this sort of money-balancing effort, or it could reflect inside information, such as the fact a key player will be unable to play. Lee's job is to know what the numbers do mean. Lee is only 34, but he is one of the most respected handicappers in Las Vegas. And his customers pay \$600 a month, or \$2,000 per season, to call him and pick his brains.

But this advice from Lee is free: "You beat the game by being selective, not by playing games just because they are on TV

# Beating the Bookies with Lem Banker

Lem Banker never held a job in his life, and he's proud of it. He lives in a luxurious home in one of the best neighborhoods in Las Vegas, buys a new Cadillac when his car's windows get dirty, and gets out of bed when he feels like it. There seem to be color television sets—sometimes more than one—in every room of the house. At 56 years of age, he can afford the luxury of time—time for the extended workouts with weights and track shoes that have kept his physique in a condition envied by much younger men.

He made every cent of the needful lucre by betting on sporting events.

"I think I chose this life partly because I was interested in sports," Banker says, "but also because I learned there are men who mistreat anybody who works for them. And I knew that if I went to work for somebody else, I would be faced with that, and I knew I couldn't stand it. I believe all men are equals. There may be short ones and tall ones, rich ones and poor ones, but all of them have 24 hours in the day.

"So I've been doing this for 35 years," he says, "and I never drew a paycheck in my life." He has written columns for some of the nation's largest newspapers—the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Post*, the *San Francisco Examiner*—and for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, with its sophisticated gambling-town readership. "I never took money for any of that except the *Daily News*, which insisted on paying me, and I gave that to charity," Banker says. "I couldn't live on the kind of money they pay newspapermen."

He laughs, "I just wrote those columns because I like to see the little guy beat the bookmaker once in a while."

Banker says he has never been a bookmaker himself, but he is so respected by legal bookmakers in Las Vegas that they may alter the line if Banker bets on a team.

In days of yore Banker was one of the privileged pros allowed to bet against the preliminary "outlaw line" released the day before odds are posted to the public in legal books. A few bettors get to make easy money in return for exposing the weaknesses in the line and allowing oddsmakers to correct them before the line is released to betting by all comers. Banker says, "I used to do that once in a while, but you can't bet more than about \$500 on the outlaw line, and then you've killed the number for later on when you might be able to put a significant wager on it. Now I would rather wait until the regular books are open.

"It's like shopping for my favorite brand of coffee. I'd rather shop at the supermarkets than a little store, because

when I find quality merchandise on sale at a good price, I want to buy a lot of it."

Banker will bet any important sport, but his current calculations involve football. Like most other serious handicappers, Banker starts by reading Mort Olshen's *Gold Sheet*, a weekly publication giving power ratings for each team and a predicted score for upcoming games. "But you don't take that as verbatim," Banker says. "You add in your personal knowledge."

On this day he was most interested in an exhibition game between the New York Giants and the Pittsburgh Steelers. "The Steelers are a four-point favorite in that game. But I happen to know that all 45 Giants have been to see their teammate [halfback] Doug Kotar, who has a tumor," he says. "There must be a tremendous emotional factor there. Win it for Doug! They are going to be very high for this game—enough to beat that four points easily." It was well before game time, but Banker spoke with the confidence of a man with the money already in his pocket.

It might as well have been in his pocket. The Giants overran the favored Steelers 22-13.

Banker believes that no pro game is a cinch. "Any pro team can beat any other sometimes, which is not true of colleges.

Pro teams are much closer to each other, because the worst team gets the top draft, and a team with a worse record gets a softer schedule."

Banker figures the home-field advantage is much more significant in college games—he allows three points for that—than in the pros, where he thinks it is worth one or possibly two points.

"And in the pros, in the long run, the team that runs the ball is going to win. Because passing is a much riskier offense. The only good thing that can happen to you is a completion, but three bad things can happen: an interception, an incompleteness, and the sacking of the quarterback."

Banker shops around every book on the Strip for the best point spreads and, when his own handicapping calculations indicate a stronger chance of winning than the posted spread would indicate, he bets.

"Every week I look at 40 college games and 14 NFL. Out of those I will probably get involved in 16 college games and nine pro games. The biggest advantage a bettor has is discipline. He doesn't have to bet on a given game, and unless the price favors me, I don't.

"Don't ever be afraid to pass up a game. They play that National Anthem every day, somewhere."—A.D.H.



JEFF SCHEID

Don't play just because you like a lot of action. And wager only a fixed percentage of the bankroll you have set aside for the hobby, no matter how good a game looks. There is no such thing as a "lock" in pro football, so it's suicide, in the long run, to put all your money on one game."

Such rules are second nature to the bookmakers themselves, most of whom are former players. One of the best-known bookmakers in town is one-time player Sonny Reizner, oddsmaker at the Castaways. Reizner, 61, says he has seen a lot of changes in the business during his career. "In the old days every bookmaker wore a big diamond ring on his little finger. It was like a policeman's badge. Now you don't see that, and you don't see the wide tie or the floppy hat. You see young guys with clipboards, guys who use computers. Guys go into gambling today like they might go into stockbroking."

Reizner says he has seen a change in the attitude of bettors, too. "It used to be that everyone would just moan all the time about how he couldn't seem to win. You knew people won big, but the guy never told you himself. Nowadays everybody runs around talking about how many games he beat. Everybody wants to be a winner."



**Handicapper Mike Lee says you win by being selective, not by playing games just because they're on TV.**

At least two of the Ewing bettors claimed they had inside information about the guilty party, and they seemed so sure that Reizner altered the odds once he had taken their bets. Neither was right, it turned out.

Reizner also runs an annual handicapping contest, offering \$250,000 prize money this year to the bettors who have the most success in picking teams that beat the point spread. Sports fans pay either \$1,000 or \$5,000 to enter. "We expect about 150 in the \$1,000 category and 50 in the \$5,000 category," Reizner says.

A bettor must beat the point spread only 52.38 percent of the time to break even against the bookmaker's 11-10 vigorish. "Quite a few of those who enter our contest do that," he says. "But the winners are only around 60 percent." The contest is so popular, according to Reizner, that some bettors have actually moved to Las Vegas to participate. "One guy flew in from New York every week."

Last year's winner, John Strzemp, 31, is a CPA. He had just moved to Las Vegas, but once he won the contest, he didn't need to open an office.

In Reizner's contest, the bettors win not merely money but also the all-important reputation of being a winner. The first contest winner, Gary Austin, was able to convert his 62-percent record into a handicapping service that reportedly sold for \$900,000 four years later.

Now he operates his own sports book. □

*A.D. Hopkins, a former gaming-magazine editor, is editor of the Nevada, the Sunday magazine of the Las Vegas Review-Journal, and a freelance writer. He once came in second in the State Liar's Contest at Tonopah and says his chief ambition is to someday finish first.*

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*Now you see young guys with clipboards, guys who use computers. Guys go into gambling today like they might go into stockbroking.*

”

Reizner was a businessman and hobby gambler most of his life, and entered the business professionally only in 1970. "I think one reason for my success," he says, "is that I feel for the fellow on the other side of the counter."

The Castaways is one of the smallest casino-hotels on the Strip, and the space allotted Reizner's sports book was initially so small that the book was called "The Hole-In-The-Wall." But Reizner's betting promotions helped put both on the map. It was Reizner who captured national headlines by posting a line on the burning question of who shot J.R. Ewing on the prime-time soap opera "Dallas." He recalls, "I didn't get so much action on that because the Gaming Control Board stopped us before we got very far into it. Now they don't want us to take bets on anything that really isn't a sporting event. But it was fun. I had lines on people who weren't even on the show, like Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys. And people would put a dollar or two on those people just for laughs."

# Elko Travel Guide

## I Hate Nevada!

A letter from California.

You people who live in Nevada have no idea how much a solid citizen of California, like myself, can dislike your state. I might add, with good reason, in fact there are several good reasons.

For instance, when I am home in California, I am perfectly content to dine on hamburger and fries, but once I cross the Nevada state line I get a deep craving for prime rib and Caesar salad. Where once I could enjoy a snack at McDonald's or Burger King, when I am in Nevada I expect my meals to be served by beautiful women in surroundings that would make Kubla Khan envious. This upsets my wife more than somewhat since she doesn't want to wear a fancy costume to serve meatloaf over the breakfast bar. Her expressions could upset my digestion for weeks.

I am usually a very placid and contented type of person. I enjoy viewing the world through my television screen. I go to a movie occasionally. I'm happy.

When I get to Nevada everything changes. I can't be satisfied to live life vicariously, watching shadows on an illuminated screen. I need Wayne Newton, live, on-stage. I need Liberace in all his sequined radiance. I need fantastic production numbers and a cast of superstars. I need *entertainment*. I need *action*.

The deprived people of Nevada will never know the thrill of risking an entire dollar on the office football pool. Never feel the excitement generated by flipping a coin to see who pays for lunch. How can you experience the adventure inherent in taking an afternoon away from work and sneaking off to the horse races? In California, Santa Anita and Bay Meadows are names filled with magic. Like glimmering candles, they draw this poor pathetic moth to the flame.

When this moth reaches Las Vegas or Reno, I am surrounded by an inferno of light. Flickering neon. Non-glare florescent. The flash of dice scampering over a verdant cloth. The scintillation of cards skating across the table. I am blinded by the glitter. Unable to resist, I throw myself into the blaze of Nevada.

Surrounded by high rollers in jeans and boots or cowboys in spangles and beads, I throw caution to the winds, abandon all hope, and carelessly wager a \$5 chip on the turn of a card or the throw of the dice. Most degrading of all, should I win, I nonchalantly murmur, "Let it ride."

Crossing into Nevada wrecks a strange and terrible magic on me. I lose my everyday personality. I become Diamond Jim Brady, Bet-A-Million Gates, or worst of all, Nick the Greek.

I know that all of this is just an illusion. I know I must return to California. To a steady job. To my stolid existence. And I hate it. And I hate Nevada.

And I'll be back Thursday. ☐

*Bill Pennington, a freelance writer, lives in Citrus Heights, California.*

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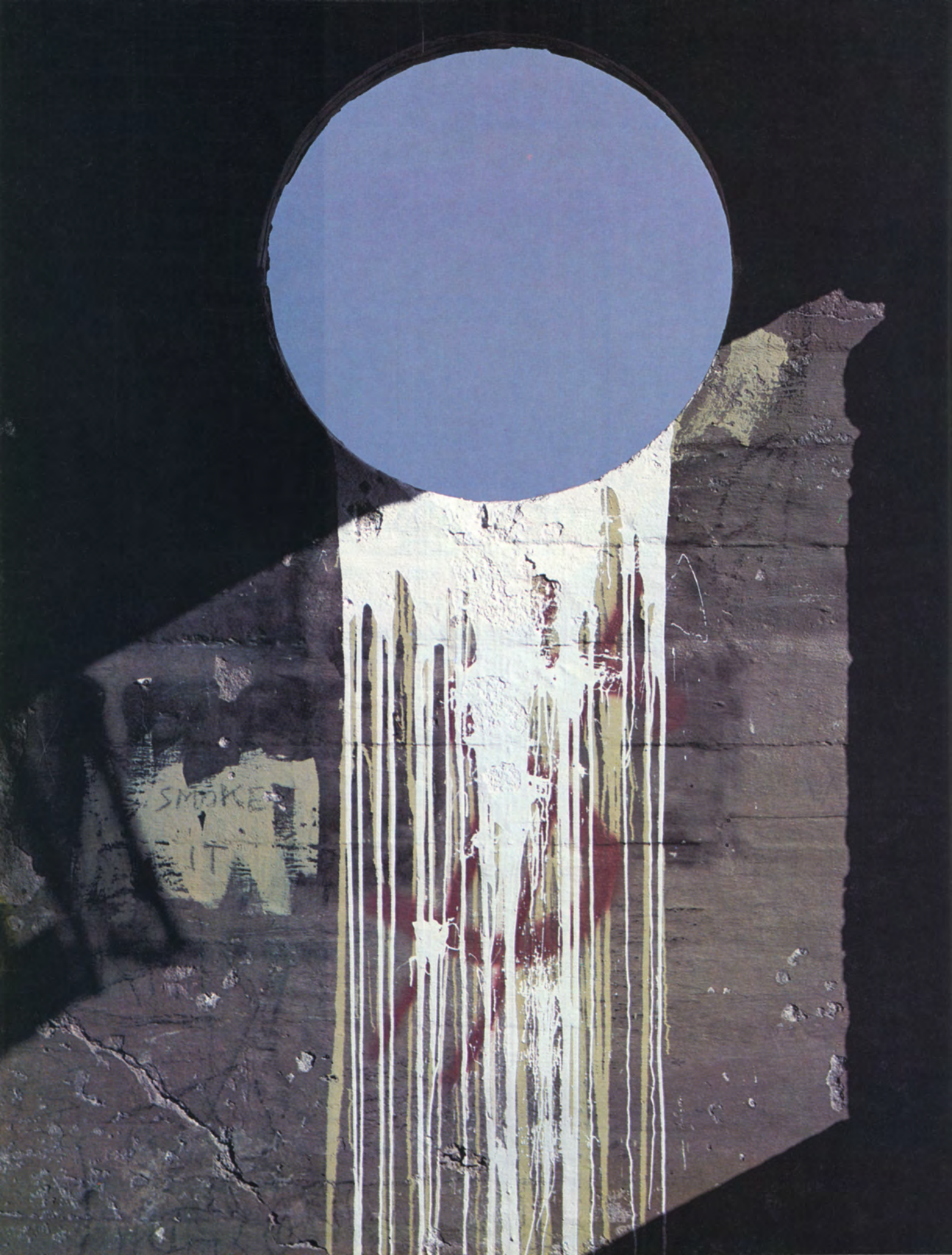


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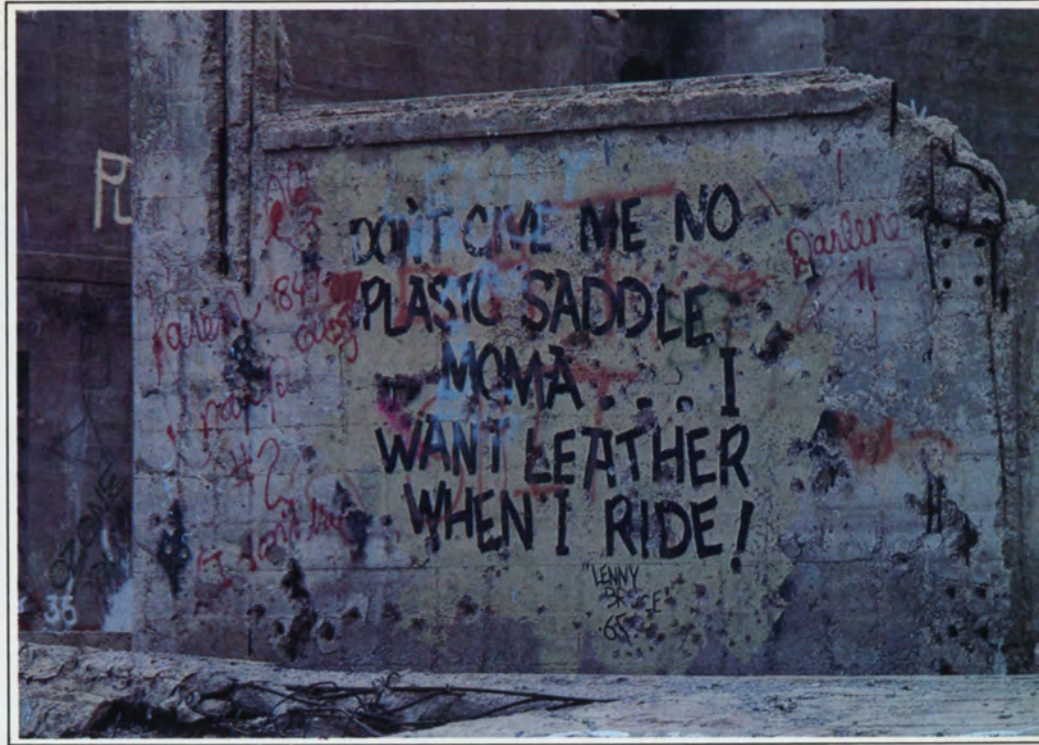


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# LOST MILL IN THE FLAT



When the United Comstock Merger Company built a 3,000-ton mill just south of Virginia City at American Flat in the 1920s, it was the largest cyanide mill of its day. Unfortunately, its sophisticated engines digested little ore, as falling silver prices condemned the mill to closure before the end of the decade.

Today the mill's massive reinforced-concrete foundations stand like Grecian ruins, open to the artistic musings of wandering poets and philosophers. Winnemucca rancher and award-winning photographer Linda Dufurrena recently made a pilgrimage to the Lost Millsite on the Flat, and here presents her photographic impressions.





The author shows off the distinctive '61-'62 model of his complete run of Nevada plates, from 1916 to 1983.

# HOT PLATES

For vintage Nevada license plates, the road may end in some nut's collection.  
By John S. Miller

**T**o announce that you're a collector of license plates is to admit to some peculiar affliction. First off, we are natural-born packrats and tend to collect other things, too, such as beer cans, hubcaps, and matchbook covers. But nothing can make the mouth go dry and the palms sweat like the glint on a rare old license

plate in mint condition. When we find an old plate, we hold a tangible piece of history. After all, not many collectibles have a date and point of origin stamped right on them, and with a little research we can find out what town the license plate came from, who it belonged to, and what kind of vehicle it was on.

While cradling a just-discovered 1917 Nevada plate in my hands, blue paint and silver numbers still bright despite the intervening 66 years, it's easy to conjure mental pictures of boom camps and miners, ranches and buckaroos. For a moment, the old days are a little less distant.

Serious license plate collectors are pur-

ists. They dislike reproductions and rusty plates that have been cleaned and repainted. A collector would rather find a plate in its original condition, no matter how homely. So when one turns up well preserved, it is a particular delight.

Compared to those of other states, Nevada plates are relatively scarce. That may be one of the reasons they are so desirable and so vigorously sought. Nevada made fewer than 7,000 plates in 1917. In New York State that same year, there were 1.5 million vehicles on the road.

I first started collecting Nevada plates as a youngster growing up on a ranch near Fallon. I found a few in a shed and promptly nailed them to the barn wall as I had seen my grandmother do in Paradise Valley. My dad gave me the plates off the family vehicles each year, and my collection began to grow. Old, rusty plates were fairly plentiful in the sagebrush a mile or so away in what apparently was a 1920s auto graveyard. Those went on the barn wall, too.

Just out of high school, I was working as a printer's devil at the *Fallon Eagle-Standard*. My work area, the metal-casting room, was a converted garage. Working the melting pot one day, I spotted a couple of plates shoved up in the rafters. It was a matched pair of 1938s, still as bright as they were when publisher Claude Smith likely put them there. That day I became a serious collector.

After 25 years of on again, off again effort, I have built a complete Nevada state run of passenger car plates from 1916 to date. My wife, Jeannette, allows me to display them on a cedar-paneled wall in the family room, to the amazement of other collectors whose spouses won't let them get onto the back porch with their stuff.

Among the rarest finds for Nevada plate collectors are the dashboard discs issued by the Secretary of State during the years 1913 through 1915. Each aluminum disc, which was somewhat larger than a silver dollar, was to be mounted on the car's dash, and the owner was obliged to provide his own numbers and mounting them on pieces of wood or leather. Samples of both are in the hands of collectors. The owner also could go to the hardware store and buy a slotted frame, tabbed numbers, and a tabbed state designation to assemble a plate for his car. I saw one of those in Ely last year.

It is believed there was a license plate factory in Carson City where plates could be made to order. Ron Bommarito of Genoa has a 1913 "pre-state" issue plate, in mint condition, hanging on a wall in his antique store. He wouldn't part with it for the world, but he will let you look at it. It's the best proof I've seen that a commercial license plate factory once existed.

The discs themselves are scarce and coveted collector's items. They are virtually priceless since those people who have duplicates are willing only to trade them, not to sell. My lone disc came from Hale Bennett, DMV registration chief, who used it successfully to coax a then-editor of a daily newspaper into providing some free publicity on a worthwhile project.

The State of Nevada has been in the license plate business since 1916. The first

one was an undated steel plate with embossed (raised) numbers. It had a green background with yellow numbers. The state designation was a stacked "NEV" on the left side. My first 1916 plate came from Bruce Greenhalgh, chief investigator at the Attorney General's office, who found it while hiking in the Pine Nut Mountains.

For the years 1917 through 1922, plates were flat steel blanks with name and numbers merely painted on. These plates quickly deteriorated in the bold Nevada sunshine, as I found out during a visit with the Metschers of Tonopah.

Phil, Bill, and Alan Metscher were born and raised in Central Nevada. Phil and Bill work for the Nevada Department of Transportation in Tonopah, and all of them are active in the Central Nevada Historical Society. Consummate history buffs, the brothers have been roaming and scrounging collectibles in Nye County all their lives.

Phil took me to their private junkyard

### Silver State Plates

This February the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles will begin issuing a completely redesigned license plate. As shown below, the new plate will have



six raised blue digits (up to seven for personalized) over a two-tone silver background showing mountains, desert, a bighorn sheep, and a Joshua tree (replacing the saguaro shown). The *Nevada Magazine* logo will top the plate, with "The Silver State" at the bottom.

### Blue Plate Special

A 25-year tradition ended last January when DMV removed the county prefixes from license plates. Some residents, who like to know just whom they are sharing the road with, mourn the loss.

But the old blue plates should be the norm for quite a while. Following are the prefixes of counties (and county seats) where they are registered:

- CH — Churchill (Fallon)
- C — Clark (Las Vegas)
- DS — Douglas (Minden)
- EL — Elko (Elko)
- ES — Esmeralda (Goldfield)
- EU — Eureka (Eureka)
- HU — Humboldt (Winnemucca)
- LA — Lander (Battle Mountain)
- LN — Lincoln (Pioche)
- LY — Lyon (Yerington)
- MN — Mineral (Hawthorne)
- NY — Nye (Tonopah)
- OR — Ormsby (now Carson City)
- PE — Pershing (Lovelock)
- ST — Storey (Virginia City)
- W — Washoe (Reno)
- WP — White Pine (Ely)

one day. On the ground were a couple hundred "flats" that represented a good part of the state's issue for those years. There was not a speck of paint on any of them. They were sun bleached to bare metal. It was enough to make a grown man cry.

The manufacture of Nevada plates was contracted to out-of-state firms for the first 11 years. The Nevada State Prison started making them in 1928. With the 1936 issue, Nevada resumed using the blue and silver combination first tried in 1917. There were a few exceptions. In 1943, the 1942 plates were renewed with a red metal tab that bolted on the corner. In 1944, due to war-caused shortages, Nevada went to a single plate, painted red with white numbers. Other single-plate years are 1945 through 1949. In 1955, the 1954 plates were carried over with a red validation sticker.

For some reason, in 1953 the state issued plates painted green with gold numbers. The resultant flap by outraged Nevadans was so sharp that veteran DMV workers were still commenting on it 20 years later. The state promptly returned to blue and silver the next year. At some point in 1968, the DMV bowed to federal pressure and began reflectorizing plates, and the silver became white. In 1969, plates were blue with white numbers, and they will remain so until February 1984 (see box).

A plate doesn't have to be old to be a valuable collector's item. A genuine governor's number one plate can be worth \$100. A rare old plate like 1917 or 1918, still new and in its wrapper, could be worth a couple hundred dollars. Add a few scratches, a crinkle, and fading paint, and the value can drop in half.

Any Nevada plate is worth two or three dollars. Premium values are added for such things as national guard, highway patrol, and wheelchair plates. But collectors prefer to trade, and after establishing a price, the trick is to find someone willing to pay it.

Collecting Nevada plates is not as simple as it once was. DMV's policies of annual renewal and allowing owners to transfer plates means some desirable items have been in use up to 14 years and may remain out of a collector's reach for years to come.

The advent of sanitary landfills all over Nevada eliminated the local dump, a traditional source of plates. Wrecking yard operators are instructed to hold unclaimed plates for the DMV, and they are likely to drive you off with a switch when they find out what you're looking for.

Barns, sheds, and garages are pretty well picked over, but they can still yield an occasional find. Antique stores sometimes have license plates. Other collectors are good suppliers. Some of my most remarkable acquisitions have come from trades with collectors in California, Oregon, Utah, and, in one instance, Michigan.

But the best source continues to be philanthropic friends and relatives who doubt your sanity but love you anyway, and will give you the things they find. □

*John S. Miller of Carson City is public affairs and membership coordinator of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Reno.*



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# Coyote's Carol

What's life like during the Yule Season in rural Northeastern Nevada?

Howly.

Lush living for coyotes has waned. Snow has come. Rodents have hibernated, birds gone south.

So the feed bin is down almost entirely to rabbits. And, when the white ground covering is crusted hard enough to support running rabbits, but fails to hold up chasing coyotes, why, there's little else for them to do than bay their dismay at the moon.

Wonderful sound, though. Once you've listened to the orchestration through an open Jackpot motel door, you'll wake nights wanting more.

Need proof for that? I knew a forest ranger who tried vainly for years to put the coyote's voice to guitar music. He wanted to make it into a song he could play on his front-room stereo at will. Genuine country western, it would have been had it turned out.

The Christmas season's other moods in the wide open parts of Nevada are pleantry to downright humorous.

Remarkd a woman of acquaintance, "Oh, for the pervading good will. Fault-finding descends to zero, as does the settling of grievances by rushing off to the courts. Neighborliness comes forward. Why does the remainder of the year have to be so obtrusively otherwise?"

Such an attitude begets general jolliness. Take the time Jackpot's Santa Claus had to laugh at his own embarrassment to the point of including both r's and both s's.

Plump as a pineapple, he "Ho-Ho-Hoed" from the wings of the stage in Cactus Pete's showroom to greet the mass of expectant children from Jackpot and its surrounding cattle ranches. (There you have a showing of seasonal friendliness, as casinos of the 1,000-population town on the Idaho border annually sponsor the party for the joy of doing good.)

"Sandy Claus," having ridden comfortably into town atop an \$83,562.50 fire truck rather than freezing in his sleigh behind rooftop-skirting reindeer, plopped full-on into a chair to individually greet the lined-up gift seekers.

Observing adults were aghast. His pants had split open at the crotch! But, in the spirit of the times, none revealed this devastation until the show was over.

"Well," the personification of the Holiday Season rationalized, "this is no time for me to get mad at myself nor the suit maker." Whereupon, he dipped into the remaining ice cream, cake, and cookies that had been served, standing to close the gap, while casino management smiled, though just a touch wryly, at the mess the kids had left



# THE DESERT PREACHER

Nelson C. Goodwin, who spreads God's word on the streets of Las Vegas and corresponds with people throughout the world, lives in the simple shack he built in the desert 40 years ago.

By Rob Powers



The hot wind whips across the desert floor, combing the shrubbery, stirring the sand, and slamming into Brother Nelson's shack on the southern fringes of the Las Vegas Valley. Relentless blasts howl through numerous cracks in the rotted wood. Dusty kerosene lamps jiggle with each gust.

"It sure has been hot. I can't hardly get cool sometimes," he says, fighting to be heard above the din. He pulls off his dark blue knit cap, thoughtfully combing back a few long, rebellious white hairs with his dirty right hand, then hitches up one of three pairs of pants he wears despite the furnace-like heat suffocating his home.

Brother Nelson stands in the corner of his shack, the dimensions of which are strained by hanging clothes, yellowed magazine articles, a desk piled high with letters from all over the world, and a large, sagging bed covered with soiled blankets. He absent-mindedly fumbles with the safety pin on front of his sweatshirt.

"I read where it's supposed to be a horrible winter," he says. It will be but one of many he has seen in his time.

"I have plenty of cover on," he adds, his piercing blue eyes, tucked behind folds of weather-bleached skin, gazing downward in a subtle gesture of self-appraisal. "I've never suffered. I've always been able to keep warm."

Brother Nelson's house stands like a sentry over heaps of old chairs, grills, rusted washing machines, bald, cracking, long since discarded tires, and other forgotten castoffs. It does not have electricity, heat, lights, or indoor plumbing. A garden hose behind his part-corrugated-metal home satisfies his needs for water. He heats his water on the same homemade stove on which he cooks his food. Out back is a large "kitchen," a dark shack with several broken refrigerators and a wood stove he says he hasn't fired up in a decade and a half. Across the way are the ruins of the general store his father ran in the 1940s.

Nelson C. Goodwin is, quite simply, an anachronism: a gentleman who thumbs his nose at 20th-century technology and modern ideals, and who is content to remain in the desert shack he constructed single-handedly 40 years ago.

A booze smuggler during Prohibition and now a born-again Christian who brings the word of God to society's misfits, Brother Nelson built his home, his world, with materials from a nearby junkyard. "The Lord done it," he explains modestly, soaking up his bleak surroundings with a sweeping gaze. "I don't take credit at all. He gave me the grace to do it." And for that, Brother Nelson is grateful.

"When I get discouraged, I go back to pray. I think about the people in Africa with nothing. They'd think they were millionaires with this.

"I get discouraged once in a while," he adds. "Then the 14th verse of John is of great comfort to me..." He recites the entire passage flawlessly, the familiar words of inspiration spilling from his mouth.

It's been more than 50 years since Brother Nelson, 79, one of eight children

born to a Kingman, Arizona, barber, found the Lord—and his life's work.

"On April 13, 1931, I accepted Jesus Christ," he murmurs. "I was smuggling alcohol from Mexico to San Diego, hoboing around the country when I got caught. I spent four months in jail. I got to reading the Bible and I found that beautiful verse, the Gospel of John..." He relates the words from the passage, his gentle, yet husky voice etched with a deep-rooted emotion. For a moment, rubbing his temples, he appears lost in a tangle of thought.

"Yes, I went to work for Jesus. The Lord used me all over the U.S. and Europe. Amen. Praise God."

Brother Nelson was a hobo preacher. He rode the freights that crisscross the vast, open stretches of country, living among the drifters for weeks at a time, carrying little more than a Bible under his arm. Occasionally he would rummage through grocery store dumpsters, making a large stew from food scraps that he would then share with others.

He aimed to bring the transients inspiration, to tell them that he changed his ways, and they could, too. God is the answer, he told them. He was the proof of that. Most, he remembers, would at least listen to what he had to say. Some wanted none of it.

"There were some close calls, all right," he says with a deliberate shake of his head. "I met three in Montana, in the hobo jungles. Three boys began throwing rocks at

me. They would have killed me like a dog. I'm sure they had a gun. Their father appeared and they ran. I believe they were possessed by the devil."

But that was then. Brother Nelson now is content to leave episodes such as that to younger men. He doesn't get around like he used to. Though a vital, robust man, he'll soon turn 80. He has no fear of death. "I'll go right into heaven," he says. The years, however, have taken their toll. And things are different now. Even the life of a hobo seems vastly more impersonal nowadays. The rails are not the fraternal haven they once were.

So in the last 10 years Brother Nelson has compressed his horizons. Now he is content to do his work among the transients who dot Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas, occasionally visiting those confined to hospitals and convalescent homes. He associates his childhood with "debauchery and degradation. As a child I developed a very deep sympathy for the outcasts and misfits of society." Las Vegas, 10 miles north of home, is an important place to Brother Nelson. "It's such a wonderful opportunity to reach the unsaved. I've never found a better place to do God's work."

He drives into town in a blue 1970 Continental sold to him by a nephew for a few hundred dollars. Lately, he says, he has had difficulty meeting his insurance premium payments on his \$300 monthly Social Security benefits, and so has been reluctant

to use his car. But things eventually will work themselves out, he believes. "It doesn't take me much to get by," he says. "Gasoline is the most expensive thing."

A typical day for Brother Nelson begins at 6 a.m. with four hours of prayer. He used to hike nine miles, every morning, to caves in the hill for his meditations. Today he prays kneeling on a rolled-up rug behind his house. After that, he writes letters. He corresponds with people all over the world whom he's read about in the *National Enquirer*—"I don't like to read that dirty old man, but there are lots of stories in there," he chuckles—or in local newspapers. He always has kept himself informed on world events although he seems to live light years from modern society in most respects. He knows in intimate detail the latest Mideast crisis and can recite the latest unemployment figures in the United States. His thoughts are crisp, his mind quick.

The rest of his time may be spent passing out gospel literature in town. At home, he feeds one of the several dogs "people throw away out here." He has adopted the strays. A few of the animals are protective of their new master. One bites at a visitor, then beats a hasty retreat when Brother Nelson gives it an angry kick.

Brother Nelson also spends an enormous amount of time reading the Bible. He pores over seven chapters each morning, reading the whole thing cover to cover every six months or so. "It's food for the soul!" he proclaims. "I couldn't exist without it. It's a roadmap for life."

Brother Nelson is not entirely alone in the desert. He prays for those on the trains and planes that periodically pass by. A brother, Charlie, in his 70s, resides in a nearby trailer. A nephew and his wife, mother, and two sons live just a few yards away in back of Brother Nelson's shack.

The preacher himself has never been married—"too busy preaching the gospel"—though he does admit somewhat contritely to seeing "many fine looking girls, all right," on his trips into town.

"I have to admit that every once in a while I get lonely," he says. "Very few people come to see me (not counting, of course, his guardian angel, who resides in an "angel room" underneath his house).

"I'd rather do the visiting," he says. "Besides, I find my fellowship in the Lord. He takes care of the situation time after time. I lean upon Him. Yes, sir, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."

The wind, which only a short time ago appeared that it would never take a rest, begins to subside as the afternoon shadows lengthen. Brother Nelson will soon prepare dinner with food he purchased on his latest excursion into Las Vegas. He bids his visitors farewell, seemingly reluctant to see them go. A goodbye is offered to the preacher.

Brother Nelson smiles and looks down at his frayed boots.

"I never say goodbye," he responds with a twinkle in his eye. "I just say good night. I'll see you in the morning." □

Rob Powers is Living Editor of the Las Vegas Review-Journal.



Brother Nelson and the desert home he built in the 1940s. Although he once traveled widely as a hobo preacher, today he is content to live here, driving each day to nearby Las Vegas to visit the transients of downtown's Fremont Street.

# Nevada Notes

It's raining frogs in Hawthorne. By Jim Crandall

## Frog Warnings at Walker

Late last summer, motorists traveling through a rainstorm on U.S. 95 along the shores of Walker Lake near Hawthorne were treated to a rare Nevada wonder—frog rain.

Indeed, what first appeared to be rain mixed with slushy hail turned out to be rain mixed with frogs. Unbelieving motorists

pulled to the sides of the road and stared in awe at the phenomenon. Sure enough, there were frogs on their windshields, hoods, bumpers, and grills. There were frogs splattered all over the road, and as far as you could see north and south. And still they rained down from the sky.

Frog rain can occur during a storm when conditions are just right, according to

meteorologists. The storm must produce a tornado or dust devil of significant suction, and that must pass over a marshy area just after a particularly exuberant frog mating season. If it does, the smaller frogs, their offspring, and even some tadpoles are sucked from their ponds by the hundreds, making a splay-footed exodus into the heavens. They remain there, floating in the clouds like a swarm of locusts, carried sometimes for hundreds of miles, until the cyclonic action of the storm subsides. Then, they fall.

In Nevada, where dust devils dance daily across the Great Basin, small animals, minerals, and vegetables fall from the sky somewhere every day. There are documented cases of raining fish (sucked from the waters of Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake) and raining brine shrimp (from Mono Lake). So, when you travel in Nevada, always carry a stout umbrella—and a frying pan.

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## Reno Arch-itecture

The city of Reno will soon add another arch to its promotional architecture, and there's seven more in the offing.

The new arch will span the Virginia Street overpass above Interstate 80, welcoming travelers with the simple words, "City of Reno." City Manager Chris Cherches says the arch should be in place before the end of 1983.

The arch will mark the beginning of a \$28 million downtown renovation that will include decorative brick sidewalks, fountains, parks, an amphitheatre, a civic center, and seven more arches across Virginia Street, each a different color of the rainbow.

These new arches will be in addition to the famous downtown arch that boasts, "Reno, the Biggest Little City in the World." It's actually the second arch to span that spot on Virginia Street. The original was built in 1927 to commemorate the transcontinental highway exposition. The slogan was added in 1929. In 1934 the arch was refaced. When city planners decided to build a more modern arch in 1964, the old arch was saved and now spans the entrance to Paradise Park just off Oddie Boulevard in east Reno.

## Battle Born Sub

Nevada, the Battle Born State, will soon have its name imprinted on the snout of a Trident nuclear submarine that is currently under construction.

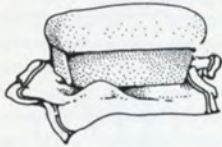
When the sub sets sail in 1985, it will put the much respected naval name *Nevada* back in action. The name is not new to the seas or the Navy. In 1869 a wooden steam frigate was commissioned under that name. And its more famous successor, the U.S.S. *Nevada*, a battleship, survived two world wars, including the attack on Pearl Harbor, Normandy, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

When the *Nevada* was finally put out to pasture, the military decided to honor her by blowing her to bits in 1946 with an atomic bomb test. But, true to her nature, she just remained afloat. Finally, after radar-guided missiles, repeated shellings, and a barrage of torpedoes, she slid gracefully into the sea. □

# Sagebrush Gourmet

## A diner's guide to the Silver State.

Following is a selective guide to reader-approved Nevada restaurants whose advertisements appear in this section. Besides descriptions of menu and atmosphere, the listings include prices, hours and other details for your convenience. If you have any comments on the establishments listed, drop us a line at Nevada Magazine, Sagebrush Gourmet, Capitol Complex, Carson City, NV. 89710.



### BAGEL DELI

1091 S. Virginia at Bagel Alley  
Reno. 322-9458

"Home of the Stuffed Bagel" and Reno's only Bagel Factory and Kosher Style Delicatessen. As the winner of Nevada State Journal's award, "Best Oddball Food Treat," this restaurant features 16 different varieties of bagels (sesame, onion, onion-garlic, cinnamon apple, cheese, etc.) baked fresh daily. Bagel Deli offers 14 different varieties of homemade cream cheeses, including avocado, date-walnut, strawberry and jalapeno pepper. Kosher style meats include hot pastrami, corned beef and turkey. The combinations for sandwiches are endless and all of the above may be combined to form an omelette of your dreams! Best homemade spicy chili in the West. Cafeteria style or counter service. Eat a little or eat a lot for a little. Don't miss this treat. Open Tues.-Fri., 8-4:30; Sat., 8:30-4:30. DELIVERY PROVIDED.

### CATTLEMEN'S

Hwy. 395, Washoe Valley  
Between Reno and Carson City. 849-1500  
A ranch-style restaurant, the cozy Cattlemen's offers excellent meals at a moderate price. The special sirloin steak dinner is a popular and good buy. Currently \$6.65, this dinner includes a baked potato, salad, bread, ranch-style beans, sirloin steak and a glass of wine. Other entrees range from a simple hamburger steak to a filet mignon and lobster. The Alaska king crab is delicious! Open seven days a week for dinner from 5 p.m. No reservations. AE, MC, VISA.

### DESERT INN & COUNTRY CLUB

3145 Las Vegas Boulevard South  
Las Vegas. 733-4444

For superb international dining, the restaurants of the Desert Inn & Country Club are unmatched in Las Vegas. The Monte Carlo Room is authentic French gourmet in every sense of the word. The Portofino, overlooking the beautiful Desert Inn casino, features unparalleled cuisine from the northern regions of Italy. Ho Wan is a veritable treasure of exquisite Chinese dining, while the tasteful LaPromenade serves great American spe-

cial 24 hours a day. All major credit cards accepted.

### LOUIS' BASQUE CORNER

301 E. 4th Street  
Reno. 323-7203

Louis' restaurant offers a warm, unhurried atmosphere that hints of yesterday. Master chefs prepare genuine Basque cuisine such as Tripes Callos, Poulet a la Basquaise, Paella, Boeuf Bourguignon, and entrees including Coq au Vin

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## Stagecoach Restaurant

Stagecoach Restaurant — A mouth-watering array of entrees, sandwiches, desserts, baked goods, etc. Budget breakfasts, 'graveyard' specials and that 'kitchen-back-home' feeling.



(chicken in red wine sauce), Lapin Chasseur (hunter's rabbit), and Ris de Veau (sweetbreads) as well as many other delicious French and Spanish Basque dishes all served family style with complimentary wine. You can enjoy a famous picon punch, cafe royal or perhaps an Izarra or choose from Louis' extensive wine list. Basque culture is reflected in the pottery, artifacts and pictures from the Pyrenees which grace the walls of the two traditional dining rooms. Louis and Lorraine Erreguibile host many special dinners and parties in this authentic Basque restaurant. Ample free parking. Lunch: Mon.-Fri., 11:30-1:30; Dinner nightly at 6 p.m. All major credit cards accepted.

### MINER'S CAFE AND SPECIALTY HOUSE

Comstock Hotel and Casino  
Second and West Street  
Reno. 329-1880

The decor of this 24-hour cafe is a colorful and faithful reproduction of the Virginia City of the 1800s when silver was pouring out of her mines. Photos of the Comstock diggings cover the souvenir-type menu, and the bill of fare is literally a page from the past with tasty entrees honoring bygone mining pioneers. Located on the mezzanine is the Specialty House Restaurant featuring Chicken Cordon Bleu, Idaho Rainbow Trout and the Comstock's famous 1-lb. New York Steak dinner with all the trimmings for \$5.99. The Miner's Cafe and Specialty House is open 24 hours daily. AE, MC, VISA.

### JOHN ASCUAGA'S NUGGET

I-80 at Nugget Avenue  
Sparks. 358-2233.

Eight unique restaurants—the most under one roof in Northern Nevada—offer award-winning cuisine at moderate prices. Each has a distinct decor and specialty menu, from the Polynesian treats of Trader Dick's to the tender cuts at the Steak House. The General Store and Farm House Coffee Shop are famous for their fresh baked desserts and breakfast specialties as well as daily specials for lunch and dinner. John's Oyster Bar features freshly steamed shellfish and a variety of seafood specialties. The Golden Rooster Room offers sumptuous buffets, while the Dutch Pantry is perfect for a quick but delicious meal. And for the ultimate treat, the Celebrity Room features superstar entertainment and a menu to match. Reservations not necessary. AE, Diners, MC, VISA.



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Las Vegas, 456-7777

Don't let the Sam's Town ambience fool you. In **Diamond Lil's**, you may crave a skilletful of ribs (and the "secret sauce" will enslave you forever), but you can also order Beef en Brochette with all the trimmings, topped with Sauce Bordelaise and 'most anything in between. Luscious appetizers, side "delectables" plus a mouth-watering selection of desserts and beverages. Sun.-Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 5-12 p.m. Sunday Champagne Brunch, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. **Willy and Jose's Cantina** offers traditional Margaritas to the highly-imaginative Chimichangas and Sam's Gone Bananas and a taste-tingling array of Mexican food specialties. Every night's a winner. Sun.-Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 5-12 p.m. Sunday Brunch from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. The **Stagecoach Restaurant** is a 24-hour, full menu family eating spot, with a special menu for the youngsters. There are "graveyard

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**STAR HOTEL**

245 Silver (at Third)  
Elko. 738-9925

Built in 1909 as a boardinghouse for Basque shepherders and ranchers, today the Star Hotel still houses shepherders. But now it also offers an extraordinary family-style restaurant specializing in hearty meals, European style. Joe and Anita Sarasua offer entrees including steak, seafood, chicken, oxtails, and roasted bits of lamb prepared with onion and red pimientos. Try a picon punch and the Friday chef's special of lobster, bacalao or rice and clams (in season). Dinner includes an ample supply of soup, salad, entree, vegetables, beans, spaghetti and french fries followed by ice cream or sherbet. Fine and plentiful fare. Dinners only: 5-9:30 p.m. Closed Sundays. No reservations. No credit cards.

**VERDI INN**

Second and Bridge Streets  
Verdi, 345-0288

The famous old Verdi Inn, owned and operated by the Engel family for the past 22 years, is situated in Verdi, Nevada, eight miles west of Reno, and has an antique bar 120 years old. The Inn is a dinner house with a Gay 90's atmosphere and serves such delicacies as frog legs, Coquille St. Jacques, prime rib, lamb, and steaks, just to name a few. Open seven days a week: Sun.-Thurs. 5:30-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 5:30-11 p.m. AE, Diners, MC, VISA. Reservations accepted. ☐

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## *The Nevada Nightingale*

*Soprano Emma Nevada left Austin to become the toast of 19th Century American and European opera, but she showed you can go home again.*

**By Josephine Delmar**

One day in the fall of 1866 the people of Austin, Nevada, proudly dedicated their new Methodist church, described enthusiastically as the most beautiful church between Chicago and San Francisco. Listed on the program was seven-year-old Emma Wixom, a local singer. When it was Emma's turn to perform, she held the audience spellbound with her pure voice. The audience called her back to the stage with thunderous applause, the first ovation in a long, spectacularly successful career. Emma Wixom, "Little Wixy," later sang soprano on opera stages throughout America and Europe as Emma Nevada.

Her name paid homage to her roots in two frontier Nevadas. Emma Wixom was born February 25, 1859, in a small Sierra mining town known as Alpha Diggin's. Her father, Dr. William Wixom, had just completed medical school when he brought his bride Kate from Michigan to the little town above Nevada City, California. The young family liked it there. But in 1862, when Emma was three, word arrived of a new strike in Nevada Territory. Some people believed it would be even richer than the Comstock Lode discovery of 1859. Dr. Wixom was among them, and so with his wife and daughter he moved by covered wagon to the new town of Austin.

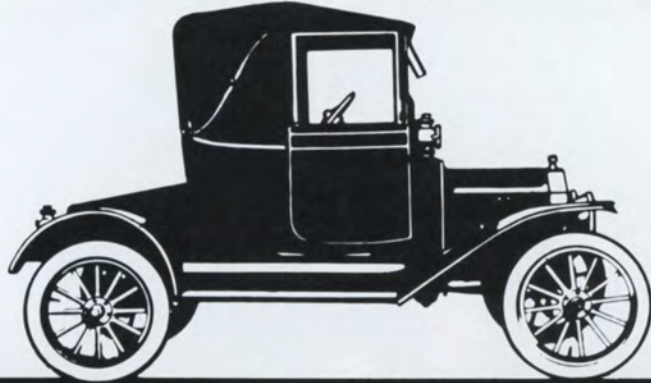
There Emma grew to womanhood. Her years in Austin in the house on Water Street and on her father's Reese River ranch were carefree and happy. She had her first formal

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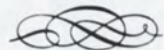
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music lessons in Austin. Ira Adams, her teacher, ensured that she practiced daily. Emma was invited to sing in concerts throughout central Nevada. She charmed townfolk, farmers and especially the miners, who often tossed gold and silver coins at her feet. The Shoshones called her Songbird. Others called her the Comstock Nightingale, the Belle of Austin and, when she went to college, the Mockingbird of Mills.

Emma was 14 when Dr. Wixom enrolled her in Mills Seminary (now Mills College) in Oakland. Her great opportunity came in 1877 when she accompanied a group of young women to Europe to study art, literature and music. In Vienna a famous voice instructor, Mathilde Marchesi, accepted Emma as her student. For three years she studied diligently, learning four operas in a four-week span. She was determined to succeed.

On the night of May 25, 1880, Emma did succeed. She made her debut in London, taking the stage name Mademoiselle Nevada. The 21-year-old soprano, so captivated the audience as Amina in Bellini's "La Somnibula" that her name and reputation spread throughout Europe. Royalty applauded her in every European capital where she performed. Her four tours of America were sell-outs from Boston to San Francisco. For nearly 30 years Emma Nevada charmed a listening world.

Before her first American tour in 1885 she insisted on returning to Austin to introduce her new husband and manager, London physician Raymond Palmer, and to sing in concert before friends and family in her hometown. On that cold night in early December, International Hall did not begin to hold the crowds of family and friends who came to hear their famous singer. The doors and windows were opened wide so that those who braved the cold mountain air outside could listen to her once again. After the concert, it was learned years later, Emma requested that the proceeds be turned over to the Methodist church, where she had first performed as a youngster.

During her last American tour in 1902, Emma returned to Nevada County, California, the place of her birth, to sing another sentimental concert. Residents from miles around came to Nevada City to welcome Little Wixy home. Her performance was inspired. As one encore she sang "Listen to the Mockingbird," a song she had made famous. The *Nevada City Journal* stated the next day: "When God in his infinite wisdom gave a good woman the magic of music, Emma Nevada was born."

There were more European tours, but when her daughter, Mignon, made her debut as an opera singer in 1910, Emma retired to spend more time with her ailing husband. He died in 1936. Emma followed in 1940 and was buried by his side in London.

"It was her nature through life," one biographer writes, "to blend a pleasant disposition with her great talent." Emma Nevada entranced audiences with her sweet voice, but she won their hearts with her unassuming nature. □

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Seven vibrant watercolors capture the jubilant flavor of Nevada gaming – craps, roulette, blackjack, poker, slots, baccarat, and keno. Each 16" x 20", acid free, high-quality print is signed and numbered by artist Erni Cabat,

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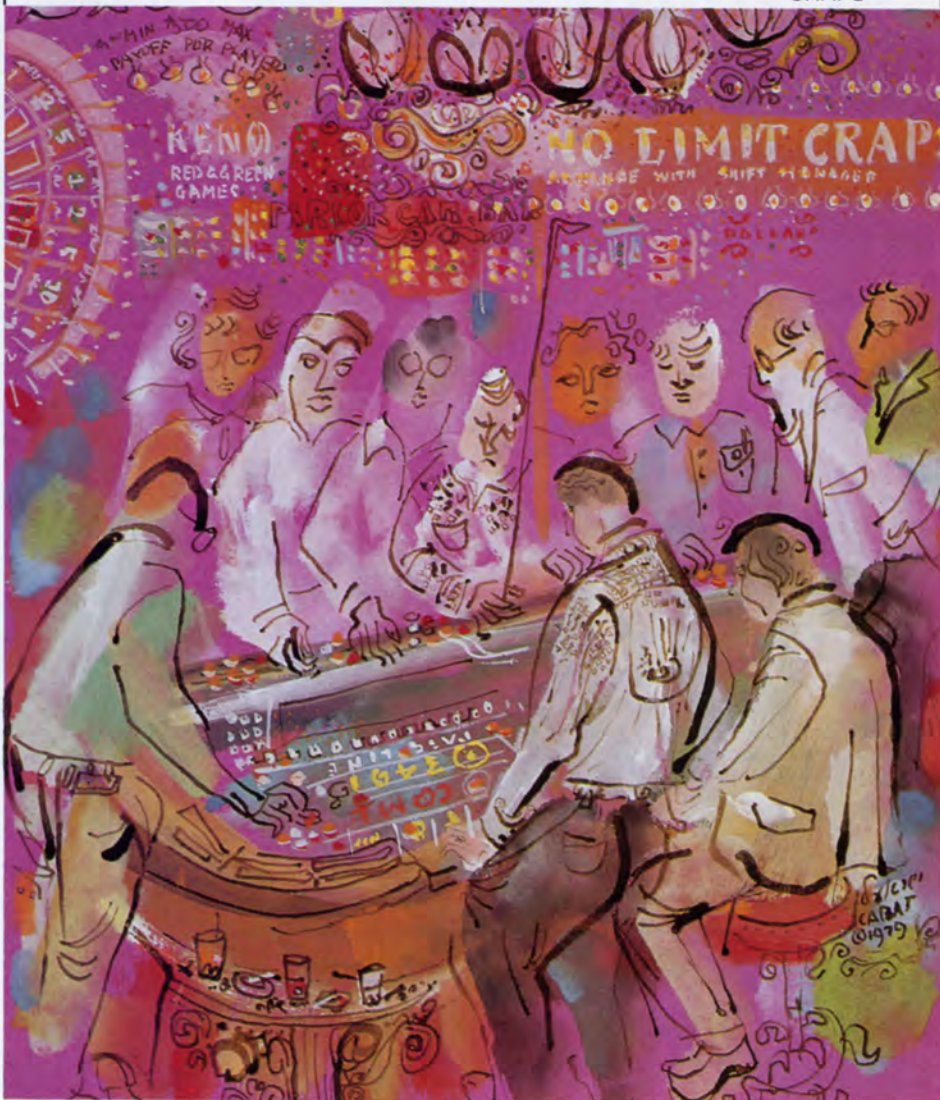
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"KENO"



"CRAPS"



"Film Can," cotton soft sculpture of life's reflections.



"Super 7," four-foot-high applique with diamondback.

# Silver Slots and Satin Snakes

Artist Joan Arrizabalaga knows how to needle.  
By Terri Sprenger-Farley



RON MORONI

**E**ve shouldn't have taken everything so seriously—the serpent, temptation, and all. At least that's what the green pythons hanging on Joan Arrizabalaga's chandelier seem to be saying.

On a first visit to the artist's staid brick Victorian home in Reno, it's impossible not to stand in the doorway and marvel at the contrast between the house's grandmotherly exterior and the eye-catching scene in the foyer, where satin snakes and overstuffed fabric slot machines beckon good-naturedly, full of color and cheerful dimension.

Arrizabalaga's ceramic and soft-sculpture slot machines have appeared in galleries from New York to Los Angeles. All her works, like

the greeters in her foyer, are inspired by casinos and their electric atmospheres.

"I think art should make people think about their lives and surroundings," Arrizabalaga says, "and I think it should be fun."

Although Nevada casino themes are central to her art, Arrizabalaga found the creative spark half a world away. After graduating from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1968, the Fallon-reared artist took off with her two daughters, ages four and six, for London. There she lived by her needle, designing and fashioning costumes for British television during the height of London's glittery rock-star period.



**"Levi Slot Machine,"** blue denim with a jackpot of buttons.

The exotic fabrics and rhinestones passing through her sewing machine reminded Joan of the take-a-chance circus atmosphere she knew back home. She realized that Nevadans, even those professionally involved with gaming, looked past certain aspects of the industry. "Everyone here tries to ignore it—the temptation, the gaudy atmosphere," Arrizabalaga says. "My work shows it, and says there's humor in it."

Not everyone initially agreed. When the artist returned to Reno in 1971 and displayed some of her ceramic slot machines at a UNR art show, she found she'd scared up a sacred cow. Newspaper headlines, accusations of obscenity, and censorship attended the unveiling of her piece, "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden." The work showed roses where rolling fruit, numbers, and symbols usually appear, and, in the tray below, mounded dog feces.

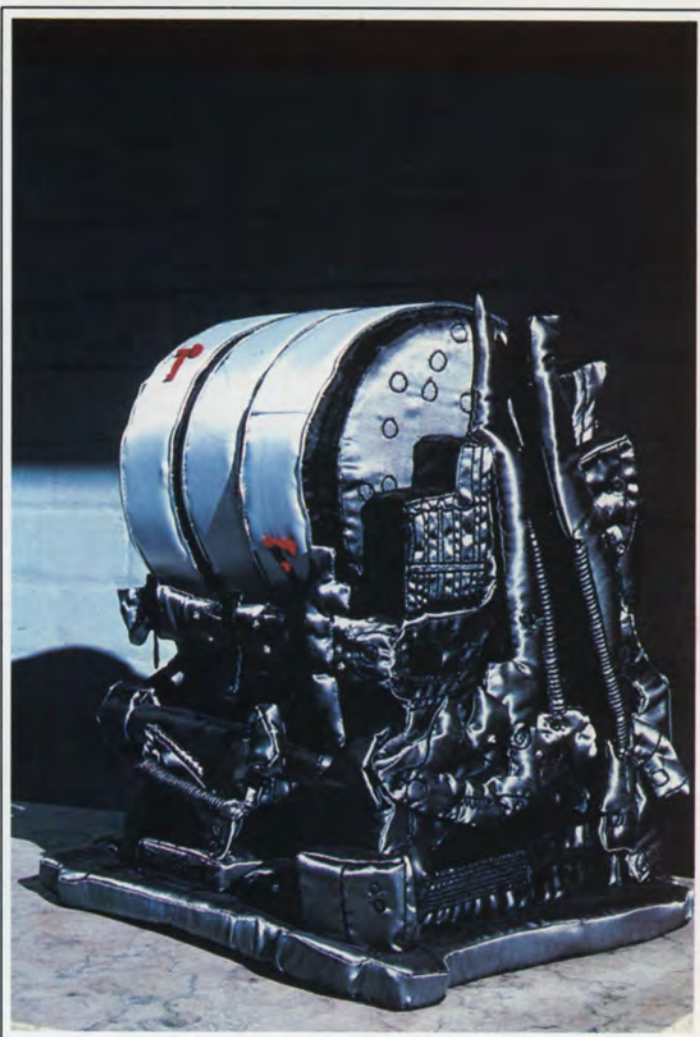
"Isn't it terrible that someone who can do something so nice would do something that awful," Joan remembers one woman remarking.

The exhibition was whisked to a back room and curtained off before touring state legislators could see it. Later the show settled in more inconspicuous quarters. "There are corner galleries where it would not be quite so apparent," explained a university official.

The corner galleries were packed.

An ability to draw admirers no matter the setting is the quality most mentioned about Arrizabalaga's work. Whether it's described by Norfolk proprietor Ed Aimone as "off the wall—it grabs people," or "emotionally and intellectually engaging" by art critic Jeff Kelley, it amounts to the same thing: Arrizabalaga's work does not hang in a quiet, unassuming way on a gallery or living room wall. It intrudes. And for that attribute and her meticulous craftsmanship, she was awarded a Nevada State Council on the Arts grant as Artist of 1977

Her well-known slot machine creations have included a Levi slot done in denim with orange stitching, and copper rivets and buttons;



**"Slot Machine Interior,"** with gray and black satin.

a "prostitute" slot in overstuffed, ruffled satin; and a clear plastic machine filled with nickel wrappers ("I went all over town one night and picked them up, myself," she says).

The artist's gambling images don't stop with slot machines. "Fifty-three Pick Up" was a Reno exhibit featuring huge playing cards of velvet, satin, and brocade.

And snakes keep popping up.

"One of my favorites," the artist recalls, "was a seven foot vinyl snake in a state of torpor." The cause of the torpor? The lumpy outline of a slot machine disfigures the serpent's middle.

Arrizabalaga recently completed a clear plastic slot machine filled with shredded money for Bill Thornton of the Reno-Tahoe Gaming Academy, and she plans to do a series of small belljar "snowstorms" featuring carved wooden slots amid bits of dollar-bill "snow."

She fantasizes about having the chance to do a large, burlesque "green felt jungle" complete with dealers, tables, gamblers, and, of course, slot machines.

"Or I might get into dancehall girls, or prostitutes—there's an awful lot of symbolism that hasn't been explored yet. But," she sighs, "the galleries are having a rough time. They have to be safe and cautious and not do anything too *avant garde*."

"You can't blame anyone for it, but they have to show things that will sell."

Nonetheless, Arrizabalaga's work will never be safe and cautious. "I'd rather have someone hate my work than be indifferent. That would be my nightmare."

Approaching the front door without a backward glance for a persistently leering python is impossible.

The artist's continued pleasant dreams are assured. □

Joan Arrizabalaga's ceramics and soft sculptures can be viewed at Norfolk, 485 5th Street, Reno, and the Reno-Tahoe Gaming Academy, 133 N. Sierra, Reno.

McCarran 2000



## APPEARING SOON IN LAS VEGAS A Brand, Spanking New International Airport

For Dusty Mac, our pesky Nevada sourdough Miner, it's a dream come true. He's been tearing up the place for so long looking for his legendary "lost McCarran Mine," we had to practically build a new airport.

### GOOD NEWS

And the good news is that Dusty Mac has "thrown in with us" to make McCarran International Airport bigger and better. He's advising people who use the airport where there might be some construction going on and

how to best use the facility (actually, we think Dusty is still diggin' around, but we don't want to call him out on that).

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McCarran 2000

The Clark County Board of Commissioners

**A Brave Mail Pilot Recalled**

Couple evenings ago to help kill time I decided to reread the June *Nevada* which I hadn't time to fully "digest" when the issue arrived. Got my nose buried in Robert Downs' "Night Flight" and discovered a classic piece of writing if ever there was one. Boy oh boy, how I felt his trepidation when trapped in a dense fog or being suddenly yanked down by a downdraft of Harrison Pass after clearing the rugged Ruby Range.

That's all home ground to me and I recall—as many old Elkoites can—the dangers and worries of those first U.S. Mail Carriers who had to fly by "the seat of their pants" and were caught above an Elko fog layer that spread and enveloped the Ruby Mountains. The stories they told of their fear as they circled and circled as gas lowered and they wondered if they were over Elko or ready to crash against the Rubies. Scary was a mild word.

Who, of the old timers, remember the couple times Mail Carrier Scott met the Rubies head on in a howling blizzard, and when every rancher and old Dr. Hood started to the mountain where the crash had been heard? And they had been met by Scott wallowing through deep snow carrying the mail sack. Shortly afterwards he attained legendary fame through his terse report to the Postal Department: "Dead stick, landed on cow. Killed cow. Scared me, Scott."

Now back to "Night Flight." Enjoyed that so much I got immersed in "Secret Harbors of Lake Mead." A fine job by McManis. From there I got reading the whole bloody magazine and before I knew it it was 2 a.m. which made a short evening and night of it.

Harry Webb  
Tujunga, CA.

**Good Sailing**

Now some words of criticism: I wouldn't mind if you'd publish the magazine monthly with less ads.

Your excellent articles on "Living Ghost Towns" and "The Great Spring Outdoors" made me feel "home" sick for that beautiful state called NEVADA! Hope to cure it soon. Best wishes from the best sailing area in the world

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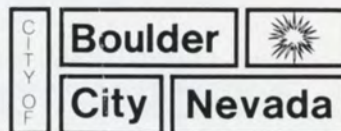
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# Nevada Under Your Christmas Tree

A shopper's roundup of rare and unusual holiday gifts that say Nevada to whoever gets 'em.

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Among the gifts below are rarities that will delight every family member and reflect Nevada's unique culture. Most items need little or no maintenance; a couple require hay and lots of care. Mailing addresses and phone numbers are included for your convenience.

## Black Rock Gold

Sealed in a clear crystal oval on an 18-inch, 12-karat gold chain are flakes of placer gold mined in the remote Black Rock Desert. Only \$55 postpaid brings you the lure of the golden West to hang around your neck. Send orders to Northeastern Nevada Museum, Box 2550, Elko, NV 89801, or call 702-738-3418.

## Rattlesnake-Skin Belts

It is said that wearing a rattlesnake skin wards off snakebite. Whether that's fact or fiction, the rattlesnake-skin belts and buckles made by craftsmen at the Northern Nevada Correctional Center are a flamboyantly attractive way to hold up your pants. The skins are backed with rawhide and laced with calfskin. Buckles are \$15 each, and a belt-and-buckle set is \$55. To order write Willie Ventling, Box 7000, NNCC, Carson City, NV 89701. Or stop by the Hobby Shop at the medium security prison at Stewart, two miles south of Carson City. The shop's hours are 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day except Thursday.

## Nevada at a Glance

Let your fingers do the walking across mountain ranges, valleys, lakes, and forests on one of many colorful Nevada relief

maps you can hang on your wall or pack with you on a hike. For a free copy of the state's Map and Publications List, write to the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0088, or call 702-784-6691. In Las Vegas you can get the bureau's maps and many other scenic Nevada maps at Mercury Blue Print, 1425 South Main Street, Las Vegas, NV 89104, 702-384-5641.

## Adopt-A-Mount

Every year the Bureau of Land Management rounds up burros and horses from overgrazed areas of Nevada. The animals, descendants of burros and horses turned loose by prospectors and ranchers, can be adopted by the public from BLM's Palomino Valley Adoption Center near Sparks. A \$75 fee is required for burros and \$125

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for horses to pay veterinarian and processing fees. To adopt a horse or burro, you must submit an application and a non-refundable \$25 payment, which will be credited toward the adoption fee. You're allowed to adopt four animals per year, and you must tame and house the animals yourself. It is a perfect, economical opportunity to set up young animal lovers with a healthy burro from Death Valley or horse from Battle Mountain. For more information and applications, write Bureau of Land Management, Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Placement Center, P.O. Box 3270, Sparks, NV 89431, or call 702-329-7219.

### Chips Off the Old Block

Have your initials embossed on poker chips for \$35 per 100, or your family crest for a



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### Buying a Spread of Your Own

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### House of Many Facets

A clear-cut choice in gifts can be found at Ludel's Jewelry in Gardnerville. The shop

specializes in diamonds, and you can either buy one cut already from the stock or pick out a rock and have it cut the way you want—right there in the store. Owner Leonard Ludel's prestige is so great that some patrons ask for an affidavit to show that he cut their stones. You can spend from \$5 up to \$50,000 on jewels. For an appointment, write Ludel's Jewelry, 1452 South Hwy 395, Gardnerville, NV 89410, or call 702-782-2646.

### Now, For the Tunnel

Nevada mining companies have cooperated in erecting a statue of feisty Adolph Sutro, builder of the famous Sutro Tunnel on the Comstock Lode in the 1870s and later mayor of San Francisco. The 18-foot statue was unveiled in Carson City near the State Capitol on Nevada Day. For those who missed the unveiling, cannot visit Carson City, or just want a statue of their own, sculptor Greg Melton of Sutro, Nevada, also has cast 18-inch replicas in bronze, each with a base of Comstock rock. Cost is \$1,750 per statue from a limited edition of 100. To order, write Sutro Educational Foundation, 4000 Hobart Road, Carson City, NV 89701, or call 702-847-0499.

### Saddles and Spurs

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### Pioched Eggs, and More

This collection of 700 special recipes, helpful hints, and humor was compiled by Pioche residents, including actor Ken Curtis (Festus on TV's "Gunsmoke"), an



adopted native by marriage. Recipes include one on how to preserve a husband: "First, use care and get one. Not too young, but tender, and a healthy growth. Make your selection carefully and let it be final. Otherwise they will not keep. Like wine, they improve with age. Do not pickle or put in hot water. This makes them sour." \$9 plus \$1.50 postage and handling. Write Cookbook, Pioche Relief Society, Pioche, NV 89043.

### Choice Turquoise

At the Austin showroom of the Shoshone Mine, one of the state's premier turquoise



producers, owner Al Lombardo displays earrings and pendants made with silver crystals from the Reese River mining district, flawless Persian turquoise, silver nuggets and chains, and his trademarked Nevada Rock Clock, a working clock decorated with gemstones (priced from \$32.50 to \$97.50). For information, contact Lombardo Turquoise Milling & Mining Co., The Shoshone Mine, Austin, NV 89310, or call 702-964-2641.

### The Real Decoy

Following the pattern of a prehistoric duck decoy found in Lovelock Cave, Fallon Paiute craftsman Ivan George makes decoys from tules in the age-old Indian tradition. George learned the art from his parents, Wuzzie and Jimmy George, the featured artists in Margaret M. Wheat's book, *Survival Arts of the Primitive Paiutes*, and in the newly released Smithsonian Institute film, *Tule Technology*. A medium duck, 10 inches long, is \$35.00, which includes shipping and handling. Write Churchill County Museum and Archives, 1050 South Maine Street, Fallon, NV 89406, or call 702-423-3677

### Nothing to Sneeze At

Homegrown Nevada honey by the jar, can, or honeycomb is sold by Thomas J. Muncey at Nevada Gold Apiary in Sparks. The bees extract pollen from white sweet clover, alfalfa, desert sunflower, snowbrush, and other various flowers and weeds in the state. The sweet stuff sells for \$2 a pint, \$4 a quart, \$15 a gallon, and \$60 for five gallons. The 10- to 12-ounce honeycombs sell for \$2 apiece. Muncey also is planning a gift pack for the Christmas season. If shopping in person be sure to call ahead. Write Thomas J. Muncey, Nevada Gold Apiary, 1927 G Street, Sparks, NV 89431, or call 702-358-0467

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# It's a Badger's Life

*A fierce fighter and hunter, the badger is the fastest dirt slinger in the West.*

*By William Curtis*

**W**hile junketing across Nevada's sprawling high-desert real estate, travelers frequently see ravens, magpies, long-eared jackrabbits, and even furtive coyotes amid the runty sagebrush and rock landscape. Persistent watchers, however, may see one of the West's most reclusive but fascinating animals, the badger, who lives low in the ground but has a high regard for rodents and survival.

Chiefly nocturnal, these squat creatures occasionally do appear in daylight, leaving their burrows at dusk and extending their hunting forays after dawn. One morning near Montello in Northeastern Nevada, I saw three badgers shuffling through the sage and rabbit weed along the road. I counted it a rare and lucky sight.

If you spot a badger, you'll know, because its markings are distinctive. A white

line extends from its back over the forehead, bordered by dark bands running past the eyes. Yet another white band bordered with black streaks fringes these facial stripes. The badger's broad back is grizzled with brownish underfur turning yellowish-tan on the sides. His short, stout legs and stubby tail are almost black. Gliding through the brush at a distance, a badger looks like a square patch of tan shag carpet with a dark leg at each corner and a stumpy head and tail at opposite ends.

Badgers belong to a large family group known as *Mustelidae*, which includes weasels, skunks, otters, wolverines, martens, and fishers. Badgers' front toenails are so long (an inch or more) that these powerful creatures may be the best digging machines in the animal world. As badgers burrow into the earth, those front claws rake the dirt back to where their sturdy back feet can muck the pile out behind them.

They are fast diggers. One day I released a badger that had stumbled into a coyote trap. When he realized he was free, the badger commenced digging into the hard-packed earth. In less than three minutes he was completely out of sight.

The animal's long, slightly down-curved nails leave pigeon-toed prints and thus make his tracks easy to identify. The nails also allow him to dig out his favored prey, such as squirrels, gophers, wood rats, and chipmunks. Almost strictly meat-eaters—carrion ranks as a blue-plate special—badgers are sometimes run down on highways because of their fondness for rabbit carcasses. A friend of mine, who once reared a badger as a pet, said his tame youngster would eat eggs and slurp down milk. I also have found the remains of snakes and lizards in their scats.

Far more commonly seen than these desert residents are the many burrows they dig. Adults will move in with a colony of ground squirrels, enlarge one of their excavations for a den, and then dig out surrounding rodents one by one until the squirrels become scarce or move away.

Badgers are something of a paradox. In irrigated pastures they reduce rodent damage but create problems with the holes they dig, which may scar the pasture and divert irrigation water into the wrong areas. Cowboys maintain that badgers pose a threat to themselves and their horses. A horse galloping through the sage could break its leg or its rider's neck if it steps into a badger hole. Nevertheless, such accidents are certainly rare, and there's always the possibility of a cayuse stumbling over a squirrel hole as well. And these mustelids do play a role in reducing rodent populations.

Badgers bear their young in late spring. For a family den, they may enlarge a squirrel hole or use a den they have dug out earlier. I have seen as few as one youngster and as many as five with their mother, but two or three offspring make up an average litter. If you find a den with young in it, the pile of dirt at the mouth usually will be flattened out from use by the youngsters as a playground. They can often be spotted during daylight hours sunning themselves in front of their den.

Adult badgers are savage battlers with

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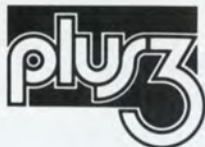
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**A badger inspects his field with an eye out for his next meal. Cowboys curse badger holes, but the animal's appetite for rodents can be a blessing.**

few natural enemies. Only animals with the strength of bears or lions could present a threat. When the youngsters first wander from their den, an eagle may swoop down and carry them off. Exceptionally hungry coyotes will latch onto very young badgers at times, being fast enough to escape retaliation from angry parents. Badgers appear to enjoy a comparatively disease-free existence. I've never seen one with mange, which can decimate coyote pups ranging in the same area as a litter of badgers.

Some are trapped for fur, but the fur quality is so poor in all but their highest, coldest habitat that most are released. They also are extremely difficult animals to skin.

separated by a layer of charcoal. The hunters believed that if they were bitten, the animal wouldn't let go until it heard the crunch of bones. Sanderson also wrote that a badger had been observed squeezing under a platform on which a horse was tied and lifting both horse and platform off the ground.

Badgers are able to cope with Nevada's freezing winters thanks to their dens. Some are known to extend 30 feet underground, though much shorter ones are the rule. There they are protected from the summer's intense heat. In winter they huddle in their dens, inactive during the coldest spells, sustained by accumulated fat.

*Once when I turned a badger loose with a hollow aluminum pole, the badger clamped onto the pole so hard I had to use an iron bar to pry its teeth loose.*

In the days before nylon, badger hair was in demand for paint brushes and shaving brushes.

Badgers were so widely known for their strength, determination, and fighting ability in Europe that they were captured and matched against the meanest dogs, regardless of size. This practice was carried over to America. There are many lurid tales of such battles, some lasted for hours in merciless heat with widespread betting. From these contests the expression "to badger" originated.

Although they weigh only from about 16 pounds to perhaps 30 for an exceptionally large male, these carnivores are not only powerful but also sink their teeth with a viselike grip. I once turned one loose from a trap with a hollow aluminum release pole. The badger clamped onto the pole so hard its teeth penetrated the metal. Since the angry critter couldn't let go, I had to pry its teeth apart with an iron bar.

In his highly-regarded book, *Living Mammals of the World*, Ivan Sanderson reports that in Denmark it was once common for badger hunters to wear two pairs of boots

When water is available, badgers drink regularly. But I've found occupied burrows in the Silver State's high-desert terrain far from any known source of water; these hardy animals apparently obtained sufficient moisture from the rodents they caught.

All mustelids have two sacs located at the base of their tail that hold strong and generally vile-smelling musk. A prime example is the skunk. Badgers do not spray their musk out as a skunk does, but, wherever a badger has been sufficiently disturbed, a distinctive penetrating odor often lingers.

The next time you spot a squat animal shuffling across a flat, stop and watch it for a few minutes. If you're nearby, the badger may flatten out—its long hairs projecting from both sides make it appear broader than it really is—hoping intruders won't detect its motionless form and move on. That, of course, will be the only polite thing to do. □

*William Curtis of Arbuckle, California, is a freelance writer and photographer who always looks for wildlife on his frequent fishing trips to Elko County.*

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# JUST ROOM AND BOARD

When a ranch horse's working days are over, he deserves greener pastures than he usually finds.

By Wally Basye

I had spent the summer at Lost Creek Dude Ranch in Jackson Hole, and Ken Neal, the manager, and I were in the corral with the brand inspector. It was necessary to get an ownership certificate each fall before we could truck those old ponies out to winter pasture.

The inspector strolled through the horses. He said, "You must have had an easy season this year. I don't see any sore backs, no cinch sores, and these horses all look fat and slick."

"These horses have worked harder this year than any year previous," Ken told him. "We just take care of them."

"I can sure see that," agreed the inspector.

I always look back on that afternoon with a bit of pride. I have made my living around horses for many years, and many of them in Nevada, as a dude wrangler, big game guide, and cowboy. All three of those professions demand horses in good physical condition, and when an old pony puts out that honest effort day after day, he deserves the sort of care that results in no sore backs, no cinch sores, decent care of the feet, and a full belly. About all an old working horse gets out of life is his room and board, and a lot of times that ain't too good.

Not an awful lot of people who use horses take good care of them. It's after their useful lives are over that a lot of horses are sent to the killers because they can't do the hard work that they have for 15 or 20 years.

Any rancher who has used a horse that long sure as hell has a pasture he can turn those old horses out in and let them graze away their days in idle retirement. After all, their labor paid for that ranch.

I got a chance one time to show an old horse I appreciated what he had done for me in the days when we were both young and frisky. I was working on a small ranch, and the morning sky looked like it was going to rain. We did the usual chores around the barn and waited for the boss to show up. He told me that I was going to town with him, which suited me fine. I asked him what for. He wanted to buy a

horse for his wife, he said, an older one that she could ride around the ranch and yet do something on, too.

"Boy," I said, "doing business with a horse dealer is a chancy operation."

"No," he said, "I heard this one old trader has a pen full of killer horses and there just might be something there."

At the pen we climbed up on the fence to look at the horses. Those old ponies had been used for about all they had in them. Back in a corner was a tall, blaze-faced stocking-legged sorrel with his head up, looking at us. He looked familiar, so I got down in the pen and walked up to the horse and sure enough, there on his hip was the M+ brand. I had ridden that old pony on the Bear Valley and Rail X ranches where they used to call him High Pockets, and I knew he had to be about 25 years old.

"This is the horse for your wife," I said. "With the care you show the ranch horses he'll go another five years and she'll sure be a horseback."

He bought the horse for the killer price, and we loaded him in the trailer and headed home. We stopped at the vets, and he had the horse's teeth floated and got him wormed. At the ranch I put my saddle on him and rode him around. He was still the same old horse. It didn't matter if you wanted to go straight up or straight down, over any kind of terrain, it was all the same to High Pockets. There wasn't anything to rope or chase, but I knew what that old pony could do when you leaped after a cow.

The lady was pleased. She rode him several times a week and grained, fed, and brushed him. I'm certain that old pony thought sure he'd gone to the promised land. He didn't make it five years—he made it seven before he laid down and died on a little ridge looking down at the door of the house.

I have an old mare that my brother-in-law is taking care of. She has her third colt now and seems pretty contented raising it. I have used her in many states and she was just as good in Nevada as she was in her home state of Arizona.

She was the only horse I ever broke that I

had a chance to go on with. She never made a wrong move in her life, and the only reason she can't speak Spanish is because I wasn't smart enough to teach her. When that old mare is ready to go, I'll have the vet out to give her a shot, up some place where it's nice and high. I never wanted to die in low country either.

If a horse was smart enough to know what was in store for him during his lifetime, the rodeo world wouldn't have to worry about bucking horses. Even a cowboy contesting in a rodeo for gold and glory has a great appreciation for the animal he's riding. I've seen the National Finals Rodeo on TV and watched some good bronc rider bite the dust and then tip his hat to the horse that did it.

I know of an old bareback horse that was being sent to the killers. Jim Mihalek, a National Finals bareback rider several times, heard about it. He got to thinking that over the years he'd won probably \$10,000 on that old pony, so he bought him. He had a few acres, so he built a shelter for the horse, got him a Shetland pony for company, and fed him good, just out of appreciation for what the horse had done for him. Dale Smith, the great calf and team roper, had a hell of a horse named Poker Chip. When the horse was retired and strolling around the ranch, someone remarked about how good the horse had it in retirement. Dale shrugged his shoulders and said, "He can sleep in the living room if he wants to. He paid for it."

I wonder if any of the ranchers taking a load of horses out to sell for chicken feed ever stop to think that those old horses probably helped him pay for the ranch and the truck he was hauling them in.

A lot of people have told me over the years that I have an odd attitude for a cowboy, that I seem to care more for horses and dogs than I do girls. A girl once told me that, for me, she would like to be a horse, a car, or a dog. Well, girls like horses, too.

I had a big romance once with a Catholic girl. In fact, it got to the point where we were thinking about marriage. In order to make it legal in the eyes of the church I had to become a Catholic, too. So I was taking this instruction from an old boy who was called a Brother. He wasn't too bad a person and we got along O.K. until one day we got to talking about the hereafter.

I mentioned the Indian's viewpoint of a happy hunting ground where you'd be reunited with old friends, horses, dogs, and your family.

"Oh, no," he said. "That doesn't work in our church. Animals can't go to the hereafter because they have no souls."

"Well, I guess that's it for me," I said and got up to go.

"You mean," he said, "you're leaving because animals can't go to heaven? That's a pagan viewpoint."

"Well, maybe," I said. "But if the creator don't want horses, dogs, and cows up there, I don't reckon he'd want someone around who'd spent his lifetime working with them and enjoyed every minute of it!" □

*Wally Basye, who is working horses somewhere in the Rockies, passes through Nevada with his saddle and typewriter now and again.*

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