

WILLIAM KNYVETT PUBLISHER
JACK PEPPER EDITOR
KENT MERIDETH CREATIVE DIRECTOR
JACK DELANEY, *Staff Writer*
BILL BRYAN, *Back Country Editor*



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CONTENTS

FEATURES

- DIG THOSE CRAZY GEODES 6 *by Jack Pepper*
PLAYING IT BY EAR 10 *by K. L. Boynton*
HANDS ACROSS THE BORDER 12 *by Jack Delaney*
SOURDOUGH IS THE YEAST OF MY WORRIES 14 *by Richard W. Brooks*
FIFTY MILES OF FURY 18 *by Al Pearce*
BILLY THE KID 20 *by Phyllis Heald*
WHEN A FORTUNE WAS A DROP IN THE BUCKET 22 *by Bill Knyvett*
DOWN UTAH'S SAN JUAN RIVER 26 *by Walter Ford*
COLORFUL CLARAVILLE 31 *by Mike Engle*
TRIP TO TICK CANYON 34 *by Dorothy Robertson*



THE COVER:

Spring is popping up all over—and so are the wild flowers. Darwin Van Campen captures the spirit of spring in his cover photograph at the Tonto National Monument taken from the Apache Trail overlooking Arizona's Roosevelt Lake.

DEPARTMENTS

- BOOK REVIEWS 4 *by Jack Pepper*
A PEEK IN THE PUBLISHER'S POKE 5 *by Bill Knyvett*
BACK COUNTRY TRAVEL 38 *by Bill Bryan*
CALENDAR OF WESTERN EVENTS 39 *Club Activities*
WOMAN'S VIEW POINT 42 *Feminine Facts*
LETTERS 43 *Readers' Comments*

ELTA SHIVELY, *Executive Secretary*

LLOYD SHIVELY, *Circulation*

MARVEL BARRETT, *Business*

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When a fortune was a drop in the



bucket

by Bill Knyvett



A wagon that once carried equipment through the Utah deserts is now covered with sand — mute testimony to our early day pioneers. Giant cores (opposite page) were discarded by the uranium engineers as they drilled the 200-foot deep shaft. Photo by author.

A CHANCE REMARK IN THE COURSE OF a dinner conversation led me into an interesting area of southeastern Utah's now rejuvenated uranium fields.

We had spent a delightful day in Capitol Reef National Monument photographing the breathtaking red-rock country that has to be seen to be fully appreciated and had returned to the Sleeping Rainbow Guest Ranch, right in the middle of Capitol Reef. After a hearty meal with our hosts, Lurt and Alice Knee, we adjourned to the comforts of a log fire and soft chairs. It was then that Lurt mentioned an old mining operation where the miners were lowered to the tunnel area more than 200 feet below the surface through a vertical shaft only 36 inches wide! On hearing this I had only two words:

"Show me!"

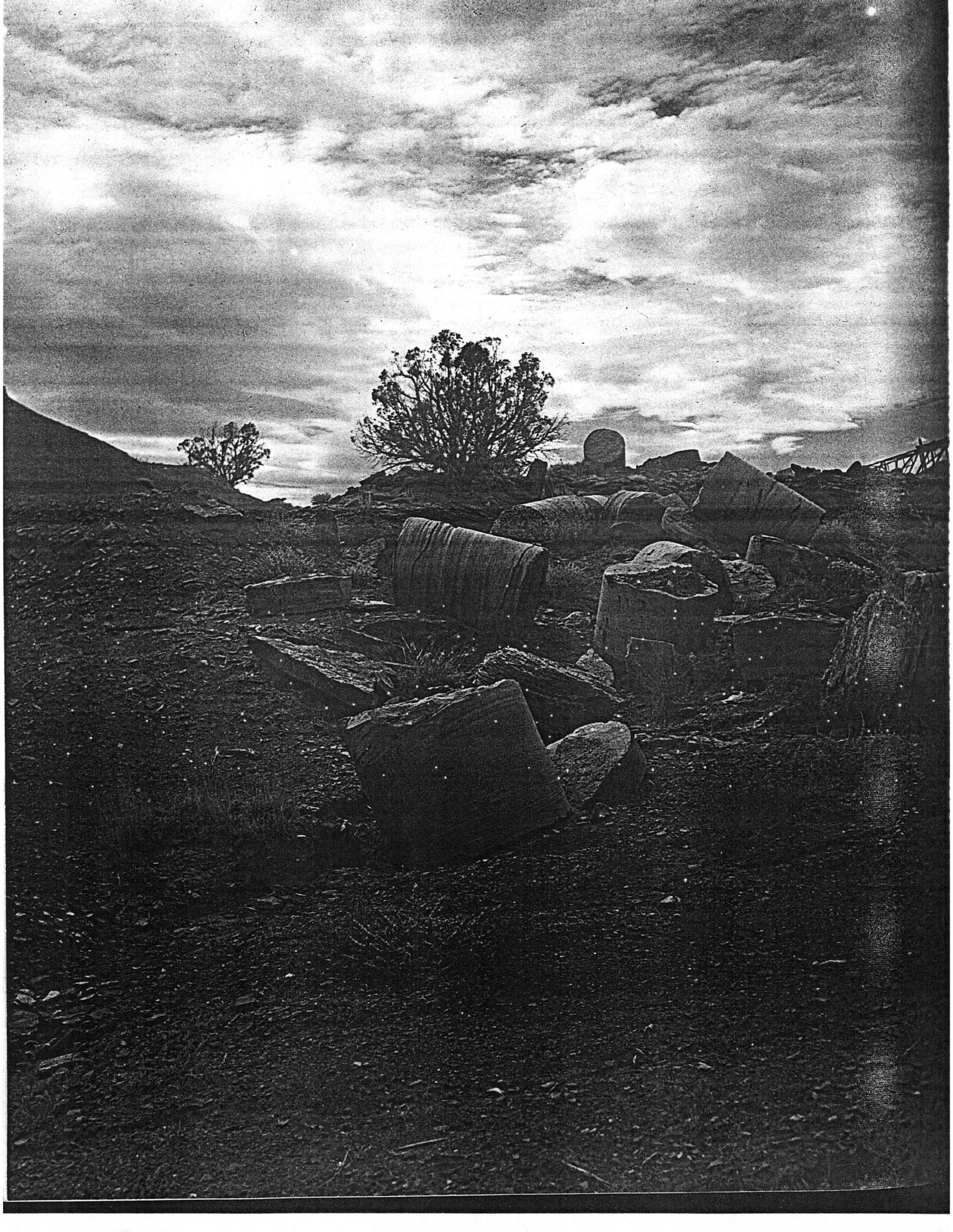
The next morning our small party consisting of my wife Joy, Edward Porter of Fairview, South Carolina, an excellent black-and-white photographer who vacations each year at Sleeping Rainbow, Lurt and myself left for a day-long tour of the old mining area.

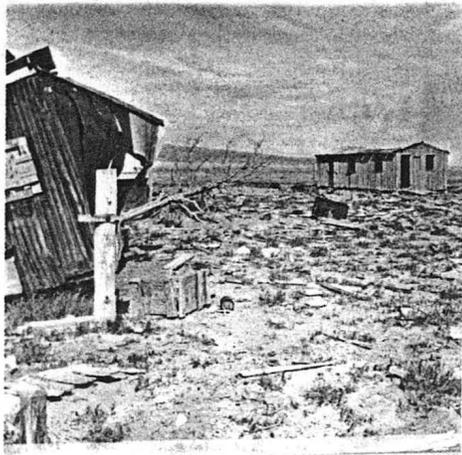
Driving the 11 miles of dirt road from the ranch to the main highway our guide gave us a lesson in geology, explaining the different stratas and colorations and described the changes that had taken place in eons passed to cause all these different formations.

As we reached the Capitol Reef Visitor Center and park headquarters the pavement began and we turned east on U-24 which follows the Fremont River for many miles. We passed through the little community of Hanksville which was settled by the Mormons in 1883 and named after Ebenezer Hanks, one of the founders of the village. It is a rustic little town as yet untouched by the commercialization of modern day.

Past Hanksville the road turns north and enters the Green River Desert area. Approximately 12 miles north Lurt put the big eight-passenger station wagon into low gear and took off across the pink-colored entrada dunes. The trail was barely visible and the drifting sands had piled up in the center of the ruts, making passage difficult. The area on either side of us was sweeping fields of wildflower. Lurt told us this was a grazing area for a herd of approximately 30 antelope.

Continued





We kept our cameras ready but the herd must have been elsewhere.

We came to Molly's Castle, a sandstone butte rising some 175 feet above the desert floor, and on past Wild Horse Butte where a gravel road makes a short six-mile detour to Goblin Valley (DESERT, Oct. '67). The valley defies description and everyone interprets the naturally formed "goblins" to his own liking. Lurt pointed out this was one area devoid of artifacts, not even an arrowhead or point, which leads many to believe the

Indians of years gone by gave this area a wide berth—being superstitious perhaps they thought it was a valley of goblins. Retracing our trail north again we passed Wild Horse Butte and Buckskin Springs where small outcroppings of coal are visible along the banks of the road.

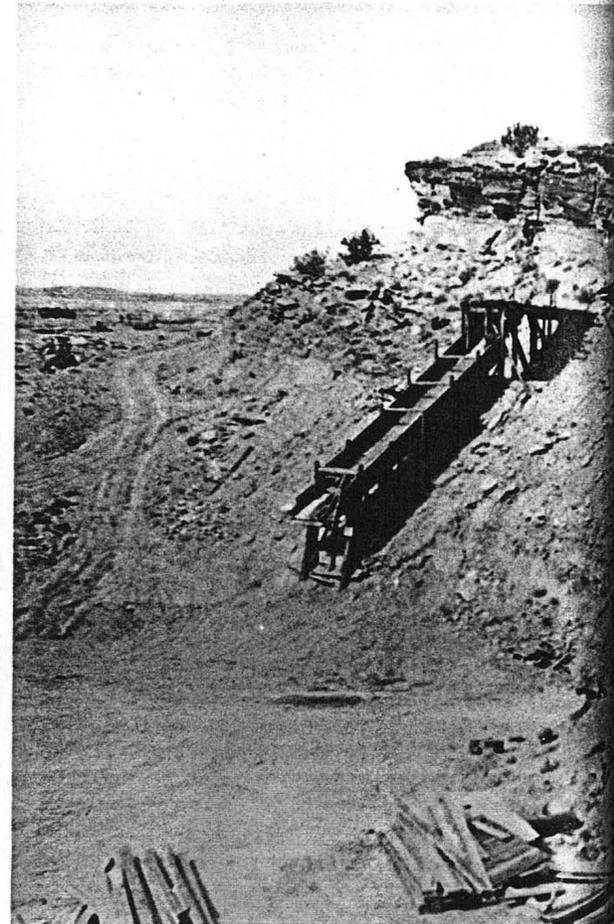
The gravel gave way to pavement as we picked up the Temple Wash Road and turned west. Only a short distance up this road we came upon some prehistoric Indian pictographs. The elements have worn many of the figures away, but what remains are very vivid having been dated as old as 1200 to 1400 years.

A mile up the road from the pictographs Lurt made a right turn and we came upon evidence of the old mining operations. It was at this point I got my first lesson in the advantage of a fluid transmission in a 4-wheel-drive vehicle. The road leading up to the mesa above had been subjected to heavy rains and was in very bad shape. We literally inched up this road. Although Lurt stopped several times to point out various features, there was no roll-back at all. Joy ordinarily would have been extremely

aware of the sharp drop-off but she came through smiling.

As we topped the hill the reason for the whole trip was apparent. When uranium was first mined the conventional use of a tunnel directly into the side of a mountain was used and various lateral tunnels were dug as the veins were followed. In drilling the sample cores from the surface it was decided that a large vertical shaft could be drilled to the desired level and the uranium ore mined from this shaft. As the drill cores were normally 4 inches in diameter, something much larger was required to facilitate the removal of both workmen and ore.

A special 36-inch core drill was made and the drilling begun. The cores were brought to the surface in 12-foot sections and lay scattered around the area like pieces of jelly roll with the different colorations appearing as multi-colored bands. At a depth of 200 feet a good grade of ore was discovered and the mining operation began. A crew of Navajo Indians was brought in and lowered down in ore buckets. These same buckets were then loaded with ore and



Lurt Knee examines the 36-inch cores which look like jelly rolls. Old mine entrance (right) shows ore-loading chute.

taken to the surface to be dumped into waiting trucks. A system was arranged where two bells meant ore was in the bucket and three bells signaled a bucket-full of miners!

After the working area was enlarged it became evident that more mechanization was necessary. This was solved very simply! A small bulldozer was taken apart and all the pieces were lowered to the cavern below. A crew of mechanics was then sent down the shaft and the dozer completely reassembled—and as far as I could determine is still down there!

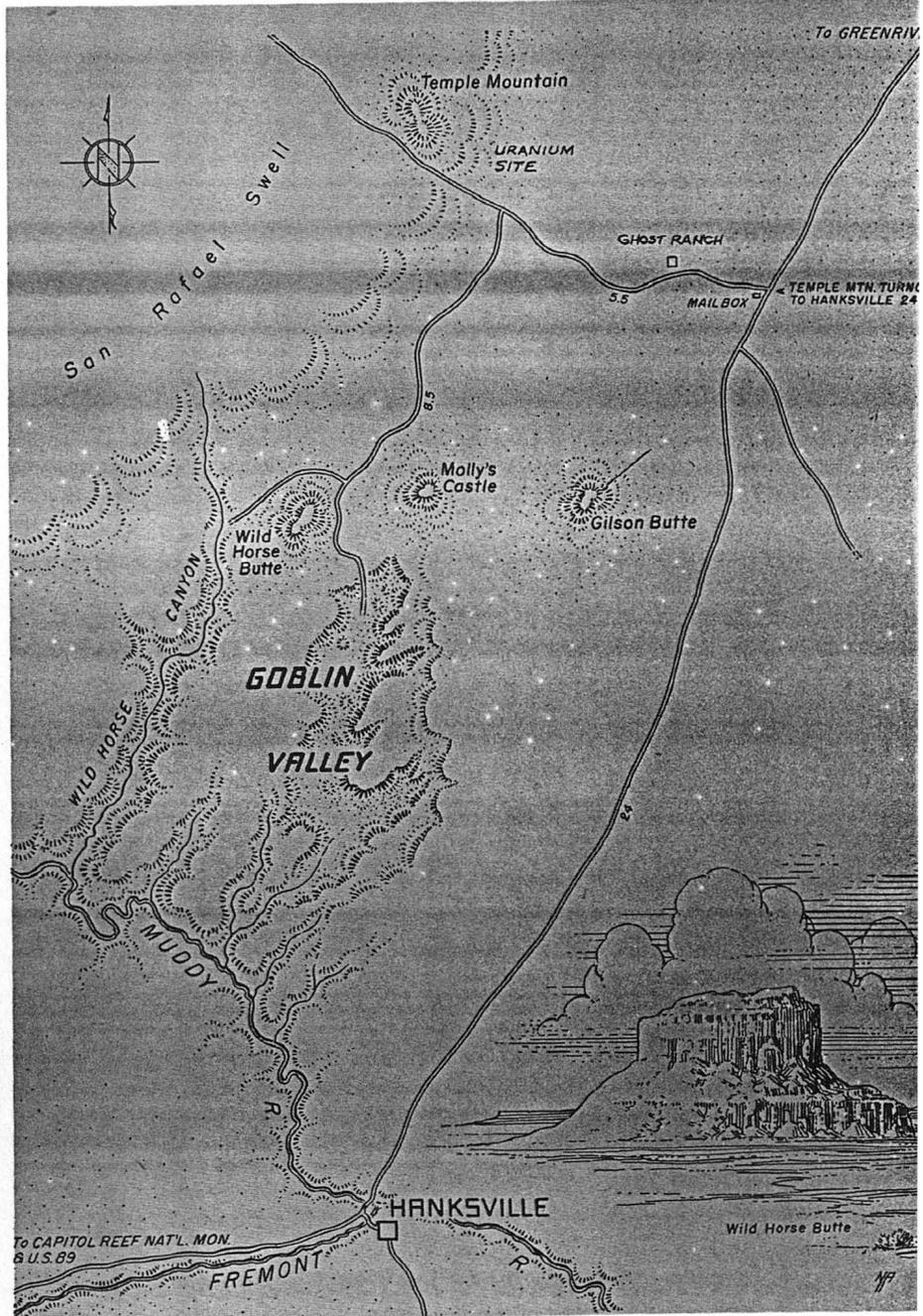
Lurt told of a funny incident that happened while the bucket operation was going full blast. He had taken a tour of shutter bugs to the area and they all assembled around the shaft head, poised to photograph the ore being dumped into the trucks. Their expressions were hilarious when up popped several smiling Indians! Someone had forgotten to tell the group that the little ore cars served a dual purpose.

That the uranium search is being re-born is evident everywhere in this area.

Continued on Page 39



En route to the uranium site the author and party stopped to photograph prehistoric Indian pictographs painted on a canyon wall. There are many in Utah.



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DROP IN THE BUCKET

Continued from Page 25

The numerous claims all appear to have been restaked and new roads are being made in all directions. We continued up the mesa and stopped at the base of Temple Mountain for our lunch. What a sight! The sun broke through an overcast day and we could see for miles across the San Rafael Reef. Turning, we gazed out across the Green River Desert where the Gilson Buttes stood out in relief against the skyline.

On our return trip we visited a "ghost ranch" which lay to the north of the Temple Wash Road and a half mile or less from where it junctions with Utah 24. The ranch had apparently been of fair size at one time but the main ranch house was completely gone except for the fireplace. Several outbuildings are standing, one in particular was interesting. It had been papered with newspapers dating back to 1925. Ed had a particularly good time shooting some of the old automobile and fashion ads.

The corral area still shows sign of use but the whole scene is desolate with a huge wagon that at one time held some kind of machinery buried to the hubs in drifting sand. This area could provide some interesting finds for anyone with a metal detector. It appears relatively clear of any signs of recent activity.

We stopped at the junction store for a cool drink and were fascinated by the old cash register being used. The proprietor said that it had come from the old Crystal Palace in Greenriver which had been a favorite hangout of the famous outlaw Butch Cassidy.

Traveling south on U-24 we passed the entrance gate to a military base and it made us all wonder at the things we had seen in one day. The ancient rock formations, the pictographs, the uranium mines, now being rekindled, the ghost ranch and the advanced technology of our defense system. Where will the next century find us!

We arrived back at the ranch in the late afternoon healthily weary and when Lurt asked what I thought now of that part of Utah that he loves so well, I replied: "Good Reef!"

Calendar of Western Events

Information on Western Events must be received at DESERT two months prior to their scheduled date.

MAY 24, ALABAMA HILLS RECREATION LANDS PARK DEDICATION, just north of the Whitney Portal Road leading out of Lone Pine, California. Public invited to barbecue, Old West events, Indian dancing and other entertainment.

MAY 25, TURTLE AND TORTOISE RACE sponsored by the California Turtle and Tortoise Club, Brookside Park, Pasadena, Calif. Public invited to enter their turtles and tortoises in competition. Free entries. Trophies and ribbon awards.

MAY THROUGH NOVEMBER, MEXICAN ARTISANS DEMONSTRATE skills in silver-making, leather, woodcarving, jewelry, weaving and glass blowing, Old Town, San Diego, Calif. Artisans work and sell their products daily in connection with "Fiesta 200" the celebration of the 200th birthday of San Diego.

MAY 24 & 25, AMERICAN RIVER GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY'S FIESTA OF GEMS, Rancho Cordova Community Center, 2197 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova, (Sacramento) Calif. Non-competitive, free admission and parking. Complete rockhound and lapidary show.

MAY 25, FLEA MARKET sponsored by the Fresno Gem and Mineral Society, Fresno County Fairgrounds, Fresno, Calif. Parking and admission free.

MAY 30 MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, THE RANDSBURG ROUNDUP sponsored by the Southern Area of the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs, Randsburg, Calif. All types of events for all members of family.

MAY 30-JUNE 1, GOLD COUNTRY 4WD CLASSIC sponsored by Sacramento Jeepers. Family event for 4WD vehicles held at Georgetown, California.

MAY 31 & JUNE 1, WESTERN GEMBOR-EE, sponsored by the Riverside Gem and Mineral Society, Alessandro Junior High School, Sunnymead, Calif. Complete show, free admission.

JUNE 7 & 8, ANNUAL ROCK SHOW sponsored by the South Bay Lapidary and Mineral Society, Torrance Recreation Center 3341 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, Calif. Complete show, free parking and admission.

JUNE 21 & 22, THIRD ANNUAL COLOMA STAMPEDE, Coloma, Calif. 4WDSA sanctioned. For further information write Camelli: City Broncos, P. O. Box 15685, Sacramento Calif. 15813.

JUNE 22-28, ALASKAN CAMPER CLUB'S Second Annual International Encampment Flying W Ranch, Colorado Springs, Colorado. All Alaskan Camper owners are welcome. Write P. O. Box 926, Arleta, Calif. 91331.

JULY 25-27, SAN DIEGO CABRILLO JUBILEE OF GEMS sponsored by the California Federation of Mineralogical Society, San Diego Community Concourse, San Diego Calif. Admission \$1.25, children under 12 free.

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