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Dewey Chambers

People

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1-1-1974

## Folk and Other Tales from the Mother Lode, edited by Dewey Chambers

Dewey W. Chambers

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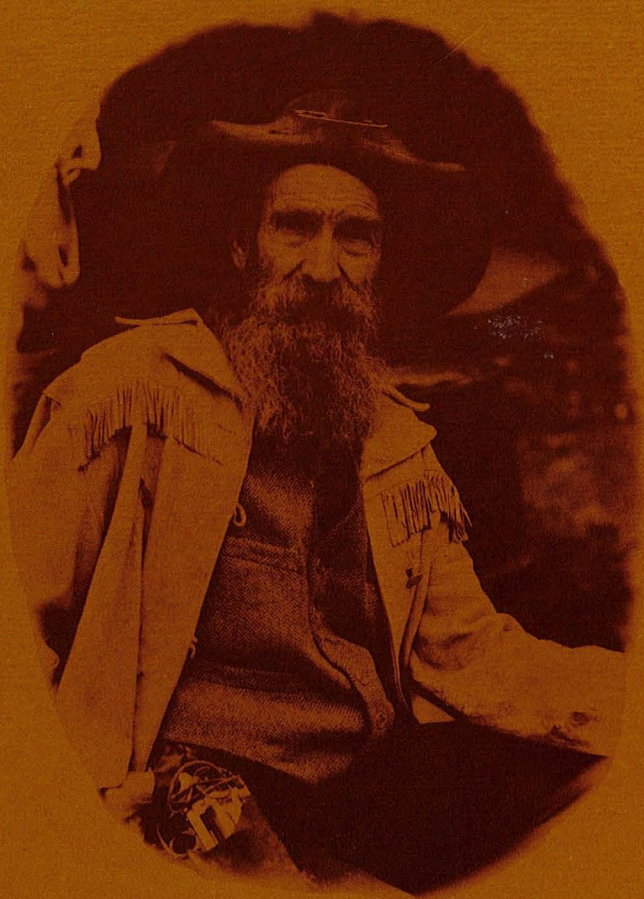
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# Folk

and other  
Tales from the  
Mother Lode

Edited by  
Dewey W. Chambers





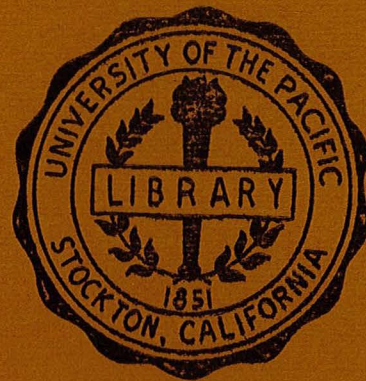


Photo: Old Ben of Sonora

by Leonard Eiger

## INTRODUCTION

We struck it rich in the Mother Lode! We struck it richer than any 49er that ever roamed those famous Sierra foothills. We struck it rich not with pick and pan, but with tape recorder and pencil. The gold we found wasn't the common metal type. The gold we found was in the memories of the people that talked to us, answered our questions and told us stories.

This little book is the result of a winter term project called "The Folk tales of the Mother Lode" offered by the University of the Pacific. Fourteen students made the historic journey from Stockton to Sonora to stay some weeks meeting the people, seeing the country-side and listening. Most important of all . . . listening. Listening for tales, listening to find "how it used to be", listening to learn about that wonderful time when gold was the king of the Mother Lode.

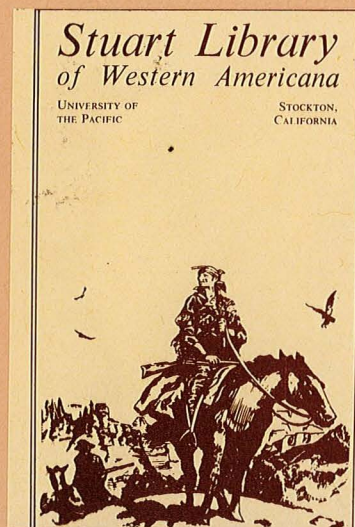
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The stories on the following pages came from the people of the Mother Lode. Some have been changed slightly to make them suitable for children, some tales have been combined into one story, some have been written down as told. Each has a foundation in fact. Each has elements of fiction. Each has tried to capture spirit and the essence of the Mother Lode.



Dr. Dewey W. Chambers  
Professor of Education  
University of the Pacific  
Stockton, California



Western  
Americana

PZ

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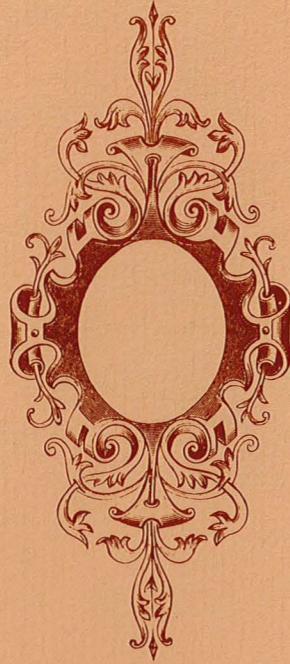
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## LUCKY PING

By Patti Carpenter

Ping was very excited this crisp, clear Sunday morning. He walked hurriedly along the familiar trail that followed the bed of Wood's Creek. The creek reminded him of the true reason he had wanted to come to California --- gold! He had heard that it was in a creek similar to this one that the first piece of gold had been discovered! And today, finally, he was going to be able to hunt for gold himself!

Ping thought back on how lucky he was to have made such a wonderful friend as Zeke Caldwell, since Zeke was White and Ping was Chinese. He knew that many white men frowned upon having such mixed friendships - but theirs was a delightful exception.

Just last week Zeke had told Ping that if all his diggings were successful, then he'd let Ping come up himself and give the mining a try. It was true that most of Ping's family and friends were only allowed to mine on Sundays, and were

As suggested by Sam Kerns  
and Charles Dambacher

limited to only used claims. Therefore, once again, again, Ping smiled deep inside because he knew he was a very lucky Chinese.

Ping's pigtail swung rhythmically behind him as he trodded steadily forward. Soon he would reach the fork in the road that would lead to Zeke's cabin. Anxiously, he quickened his pace that was the common jaunt for his people.

The trees and hills around him began to grow dense. Zeke loved the great outdoors and liked living back in the hills. He didn't associate much with all the other miners of the area. Ping liked that about Zeke. Maybe that was one reason they got along so well.

Ping looked ahead and saw a thin trail of smoke rising from what he knew was Zeke's very own miner's shack. He could also hear a steady thump, thump, thump, the sound of Zeke's axe preparing the week's fuel.

"Howdy there, Ping!" Zeke shouted as he



saw him approaching. "You all ready to try your luck with the Mother Lode?"

"I sure am," Ping chuckled, "I can't wait to get my hands on her!"

"Well then, I'll drop my axe, and we'll get strated!"

As they were heading up the back way to Zeke's small claim, they were both startled by the sound of rowdy men's voices, and the frustrating growls, screams, and sighs of a furious Grizzly bear. Ping had never heard such noises and wanted to investigate immediately! Before Zeke could get a word in edgewise, Ping was off in the opposite direction, heading straight for the sounds of the ruckus. Instinctively, Zeke followed him because he was aware of the great possibility of danger! There was nothing more feared in the Mother Lode than a riled Grizzly, and Zeke knew for a fact that even four men alone could not compete with the super strength of the grizzly.

However, Ping was not aware of danger and his curiosity had gotten the best of him, and before he realized what had happened, he

suddenly found himself in a small clearing right in the middle of three horses, and four drunken men.

Coming suddenly to his senses, he found a small stump behind which he quickly took refuge. He saw only a fine Grizzly trapped by four ropes around each leg. Saliva was frothing from his mouth as he struggled to get free. The four men appeared to be in control, however, the condition of the three horses only heightened the tenseness of the conflict.

Ping turned away only a second to see Zeke approaching his new found hideaway.

"Are you all right, Ping?" he panted caringly.

"Luckily, I am so," Ping said reassuringly, directing Zeke's attention to the continuing struggle. "Can't we do something to save the bear, Zeke?"

"I'm afraid, Ping, these men are only a small part of the pleasure starved miners who find their fun by capturing such Grizzlies, and bringing them to town to fight with the bulls

of Spanish stock. There are probably one hundred to two thousand men awaiting this bear's arrival, and against just the two of us, Ping, that seems a slight bit impossible. Besides we come up here to look for gold, not rescue Grizzlies!"

"I know, Zeke, but look! - they have got him down now, he will never get away! And watch now! They are dragging him this way!"

So caught up in the excitement of their find, the men did not even notice Zeke and Ping crouched down along the pathway. As they rode by, Ping tenderly reached out his hand and stroked the bear. He stared into the bear's half shut eyes and smiled. Zeke frantically yanked Ping back away from the reach of his vicious claw. But no vengeful attack effort was made by the bear. Zeke was amazed.

Suddenly the "gold fever" that Ping had felt so strongly earlier this morning was gone. He looked down at his hand and saw the dirt, sweat, and hair, the bear had left behind. He could smell the pungent odor of those keepsakes. Ping's only thought and desire now was to follow

those men with the bear.

Zeke was not particularly in favor of the idea of returning to town, but he knew Ping would go no matter what; so, Zeke decided to come along in case the rowdy miners should get some crazy idea of fighting the bulls with a stray Chinese. Zeke tried to prepare Ping for the scene that was to take place, but it was no use. Ping would have to see it for himself.

Before an audience of about three hundred men, Ping next saw the bear waiting in the center of a make-shift arena of boxes, barrels, and brush. The bear paced within the circle at the end of a ten foot chain attached to one hind leg and an iron ring in the center of the circle. Within seconds his waiting pace was interrupted by the rattle of a latch. The doors of the stable swung open and two bulls charged out. The first made no attempt to attack the bear. Stopping at the runway entrance to the arena, he surveyed the men pressing against the barricade. His hide quivered. He sniffed the air, but otherwise, stood motionless.



The men in the audience were disappointed so they began to jeer the bull, and throw insults at the bear. They wanted entertainment and they would get it, one way or another.

Before Ping realized what was happening, he heard the second bull bellow, and make a lunge for the bear. The bear made ready for him. He curled himself into a ball, and the furious bull rushed over him, missing his stroke. At the same moment the bear sprang up sinking his teeth into the bull's flesh.

This sent the bull into a greater rage.

Cheers from the onlookers for the bear-- Ping stood, mouth open, speechless.

Snorting and trembling the bull tried to shake the bear loose, and with one blow of his hooves, the bull kicked the bear soundly!

More cheers from the crowd!

Once again the enraged bull lifted the bear over his head and flung him backwards. The bear thundered to the ground!

This angered the bear so much, that his next blow to the bull went clear to the bone of

his leg and caused him to be lame.

In one last effort to shake the bear loose, the bull succeeded in goring one side of the bear!

At that the bull fled back to the entrance and away, but somehow in the struggle, the iron ring had become dislodged from the ground - and to Ping's and the others' amazement - they saw that the bear was loose, heading straight for the crowd. He was headed directly for the place where Ping and Zeke were standing!

Zeke grabbed Ping's arm to pull him out of the way, but Ping's feet got tangled and he fell head first to the ground. Those around, other than Zeke, seeing him fall knew he was only a Chinese, and so continued to run for their own safety. Cut on the forehead by a rock, Ping struggled to bring himself on all fours, regain his balance, in order to flee once more.

But as he did, he found himself soon to be face to face on all fours with the Grizzly. Ping was so frightened that he was unable to move! He tried to bring his head forward to protect his face but the pain in his head caused

him to throw his neck backwards.

A few feet away, Zeke was torn as to what to do! Just how much was Ping's friendship worth? After all, he was only Chinese. And yet, he was a friend! So Zeke decided to go back - but only to find he was a second too late, the bear was already there.

To Zeke's utter amazement, Ping once again smiled at the bear and held his hand to his nose so he could smell his own scent. Miraculously, the bear growled frustratingly but graciously turned the other way, leaving Ping to live with his own wound. Ping stared as the bear raced in the direction of the hills, and he hoped that the bear would live to heal his own wound also.

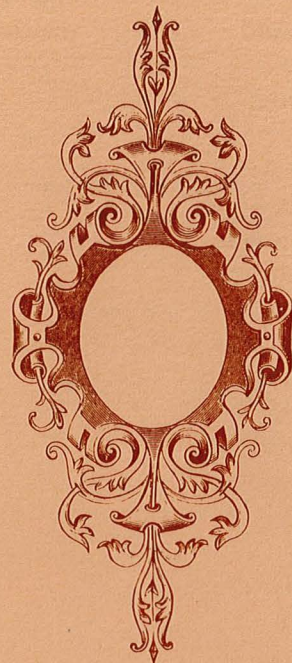
Zeke ran to Ping's side and held his head which now was bleeding freely. Ping felt only slight pain. He walked bravely back to Zeke's shack.

After a few days rest and good friendly care, Ping decided to walk back down the trail to his home. Zeke told him that the next time he came up the only ailment to the head he

wanted to see was "gold fever"!

This made Ping smile. And as he walked back home, pigtail swinging rhythmically, he realized what a lucky man he really was.





## THE HALLOWEEN BANDIT

By A. Lynee Burke

Johnny Wilson set the box on the bed. It was a big, soft, old-fashioned bed.

"Put the box right here, Ben," he said to his friend who also carried a box.

Johnny was ten years old with blond hair and blue eyes. Most people would have said he was skinny, but Johnny always said he wasn't. He said he was just tall.

Ben looked shorter than Johnny but was much heavier. With his dark curly hair and brown eyes, he didn't look like Johnny at all. Still, they were best friends.

In fact, it seemed like they had always been best friends. They had tricked or treated together on every Halloween since they were three. That was back in Pennsylvania where they used to live. But this was October 30, 1852, and they wouldn't be in Pennsylvania this time for Halloween. During the summer, their fathers had brought their families to the California gold fields.

Based on tales from Alvin Sylva,  
Arthur R. Wilson, and Richard Coke Wood

Now Ben's family lived in the mining town called Angels Camp. Johnny's family had settled, here, in Murphys Diggins, but everybody just called it Murphys. Halloween in the middle of the gold rush was going to be different.

"I'm real sorry your Ma is sick, Ben, but I'm sure glad you can stay here till she's well," said Johnny.

"Me, too," answered Ben. "Wait till you see the swell oak knot I've got to make a top from. I think it's in this box here."

"We'll find it when we put your stuff away in the chest," said Johnny. "Let's hurry. We've got to get our Halloween costumes ready for tomorrow night and think up some good tricks!"

"We're going to trick or treat in a mining town?" Ben asked in surprise. "You're crazy!" he exclaimed. "Miners never have treats. All they every have are beans, slapjacks, and coffee.



That ain't my idea of a treat!"

Johnny held up his hand and said, "Hold it. I've been working on it. There are some women in town now, and some have children. I've been reminding them that Halloween is coming. That's just step number one. Okay so far?" he asked his friend.

"I should have figured you would have a plan," sighed Ben with a shake of his head. "You always do."

"Next, we'll go to some of the miners' tents and cabins where I go to visit. If we're lucky they'll be out of treats and give us gold nuggets," Johnny explained in triumph. "If they don't give us something then we'll trick 'em."

"Golly, Johnny, nuggets would be swell treats," said Ben excitedly. "This might be a great Halloween!"

"Sure," said Johnny. "I've even been working on old Juan, my Mexican friend. I explained all about Halloween to him so I bet he'll have a treat for us. Maybe we can go find him, now, and make sure he doesn't forget."

The boys were full of plans while they worked. Then they went to find old Juan and to explore Murphys. Some Indian children lived up in the rancheria on the ridge, but they didn't see any in town. Mostly, they saw men; lots and lots of men. They had come from all parts of the world in hopes of finding gold.

The boys couldn't find Juan at his place in town, and Johnny's mother would blister him if they went into the Mexican section too far.

"She's afraid on account of the bandit Joaquin Murietta," Johnny explained to Ben. "She doesn't believe that he likes kids, but Juan says he does."

Old Juan was Johnny's favorite of all the men in town. He was full of stories about the bandit. Murietta's sister, Juanita, lived in Murphys. Juan said that Joaquin was really a good bandito. Once, he had been a gambler here in Murphys until the miners killed his wife and brother. Then he became a bandit.

"Now he is a famous bad man," Juan once told Johnny, "but he never hurts anyone

in Murphys for the sake of his sister. Also, Ben Marshall, the constable, is his amigo. He just slips into town to visit his sister and friends."

Johnny told all of this to Ben, but Ben still wasn't convinced that Murietta liked children.

"Have you ever heard of him shootin' a kid, Ben?" Johnny asked.

Ben said, "I don't know about all of that, Johnny. I do know that he and his gang did some pretty wild shootin' down at Forks in the Road last month. There's even a price on his head. And nobody is really sure what he looks like."

So, even though the bandit was interesting, plans for Halloween took over the conversation. The boys picked their way back to Johnny's house between holes, piles of dirt, tents, and cabins. From then on until the next night, they worked and planned.

By dusk on Halloween night, the boys had already finished trick or treating at the cabins where women lived. Just as Johnny had said, the women had remembered to have a treat

ready for each goblin. Both boys now had several treats in their bags. Because of the sheets they wore over heavy coats, they had to go before it got too dark. After all, there were no street lights, and a mining town like Murphys was full of rocks, holes, and piles of dirt. They had to be careful. Besides, Johnny's mother was just sure that something terrible would happen to them if they were out after dark.

They decided to go to Dusty and Stoney's cabin next.

"Trick or treat," they shouted when they reached the cabin.

"Well, well. Look what we got here, Stoney," said Dusty when he opened the door. "Two ghosts have come fer a visit."

Tall, lanky Stoney peeked out and said, "We've got some way up grub here, but I bet that's not what these ghosts are after."

Stoney came to the doorway and took out his poke of gold dust. He took out two small nuggets and gave one to each boy.

"Now maybe these ghosts won't be so



likely to trick tonight," he chuckled.

"Thanks," the boys shouted together as they ran off.

"Let's go to Juan's now," suggested Johnny.

"Okay," answered Ben.

Away they went, two ghosts running through the tents. It was dark now and very chilly.

At Juan's shack they knocked and shouted, "Trick or treat, Juan."

The door opened, but it wasn't Juan standing in the lighted doorway. It was a tall, slender Mexican. He was very handsome with snapping black eyes. His trim black pants and short coat were very dashing with the white ruffled shirt. A black hat was tilted over his right eyebrow, and his right hand rested on the handle of a large gun in the the holster that he wore.

"What means this 'trick or treat'?" he asked sternly.

Neither boy could answer. They were frozen to the spot and speechless. Each of them was certain that this must be the bandit, Joaquin Murietta!

"Joaquin knows 'tricks', but what is this 'treat'?" asked the man.

Johnny recovered his voice enough to say, "Excuse me, sir, I think we got the wrong place. Bye."

The two boys, costumes and all, turned and ran as fast as they could. They could hear Murietta laughing as they went. Not stopping once, they ran back to Johnny's cabin, went straight in to Johnny's bed, and hid under the covers. Finally, they calmed down enough to explain to Johnny's Ma that they had seen a goblin, and they meant a REAL goblin!

The next day they ran into Juan who had a treat for each of them and a twinkle in his eyes. Neither boy felt like talking to him so they quickly went on.

Years later, when he was a man, Johnny Wilson thought back on that Halloween when he and Ben had seen Joaquin Murietta. Had they seen the real Joaquin Murietta? When he remembered the twinkle in old Juan's eyes, he wondered if he and Ben had been the ones to be tricked.

## A DAY OF CELEBRATION

By Margaret Merwin

"Now, hurry up there, boy, or you'll not get there 'till long after the drug store has closed!" Otis knew that this was the last warning, so he picked up his woolen jacket and started for the door. The screen door had been torn so long ago, that no one even noticed it anymore. It slammed shut behind him as he started his long journey to town.

Otis enjoyed the walk which led him through the mountainous green country. Ten years before, he had been born in the outskirts of the mining camp with a special love for this country. He liked the clean cedar smell of the lumber mills at work, and as he breathed in the smell of the new day, he smiled.

Before he knew it, he was in the bustling little mining town of Sonora. Otis could see the townspeople wandering down the main street. The miners staggered in and out of the town's four saloons, paying no attention to the curious

Based on a story told by Annie Segalli

little boy who walked among them. There seemed to be an unusual feeling in the mining town -- a feeling of tense excitement.

Otis wandered down the street, stopping whenever he saw something of interest along the way. Suddenly, he remembered his mother's warning. A feeling of panic raced through him. "Don't get there after Mr. Pickering has gone home!" With that, he started to run down the narrow dirt street, dodging horses and people as he went. As the drug store came into view, he ran up to the glass window, pressing his nose against the pane. There was Mr. Pickering, the store owner, just getting ready to close shop for the day.

"Well, well. If it isn't Otis Barkley!" he said smiling as he looked down across the counter. "Tisn't often that the Barkley family gets to town. What can I do for you, son?"

"Mr. --- Pickering," he gasped trying to



catch his breath from his long run. "My ma says that you have the herbs we ordered on the Well's Fargo last month."

"Let me think, now son. I am gettin' ready to close -- past 4:00 ya' know. Oh, yes, I do recall now. Yup! The Barkley order of course. Wait right here."

Mr. Pickering's bald head disappeared behind the corner to the supplies room in back, leaving Otis to himself. Never before had he seen spice high cabinets. The dark wood shelves which reached up to the ceiling, were stacked with large glass jars of drugs and herbs. "I wonder which herb Ma sent me here for," he thought as he looked up and down.

"Here we are," said Mr. Pickering, scaring Otis as he came up from behind. "This should do it. This supply will last the Barkley's for quite some time. And here's a peppermint stick for your long walk home. Now, run along, it'll be getting dark 'for ya' know it."

"I thank ya', Mr. Pickering!" And with that, he was out the door.

When he stepped into the street, however, something changed. There were people hurrying towards the other end of town. The dazed little boy stood at Mr. Pickering's door. He stared at the sudden tide of people who moved down the street. "Where are they going?", he thought. "I want to go, too. It must be fun to draw such a crowd!"

Otic clutched his package of herbs and joined the rush of men, women, and children. As they talked and laughed among themselves he heard a woman say, "What a day this is!". A flannel shirted miner said, "I'm glad so many turned out!" Otis still was confused, but was happy to share in the excitement!

In a few moments, they had reached the end of the dirt street. They started to turn towards the clearing just outside town. Otis thought, "This must be the biggest celebration ever! It's sure a good thing Ma needed those herbs today. Else I would've missed it!" Otis followed the crowd as it moved down Simon's Hill and in the gulch below. The shouts were

becoming louder now, so loud that he could not tell one from another. In the chaos, Otis became lost within the crowd. He looked up but everything seemed to be a blur of red and blue plaid flannel shirts and drab gray hats. He could not see up or out; he was trapped within the crowd.

Suddenly he could hear a man's voice coming from the head of the crowd. Although Otis could not hear exactly what was being said, he knew it was a solemn speaker. The crowd went wild with the speech and jeered and whistled when it finished.

"Wha'd he say?" yelled Otis. But the people around him were unaware of the little boy below them, and paid no attention to his question. Frustrated by them, he didn't bother to ask anymore questions. He decided to find out for himself.

Otis began pushing his way through the crowd towards the front. As he shoved, people were moved aside giving the boy just enough room to squeeze through. The harder he pushed, the more determined he became. By this time,

the crowd was hysterical. Never had Otis seen such an unruly mob. It almost frightened him. He began to see an end to the mass of people. "Soon I'll be at the front," he thought to himself. For some reason the excitement of the people around him rubbed off on him, and now he too was yelling. He pushed and shoved a little harder - and finally stumbled through to the very front. Otis caught himself and looked straight ahead. There before him stood a huge stand made out of wood. There were men dressed in their Sunday best, standing directly in front of it. All eyes were looking up.

Otis slowly looked up in the direction in which they stared. His eyes followed the stairway leading from the dirt ground to the gallows at the top. Otis gasped at the horrible sight, for at the top of those stairs was a man swinging back and forth - a rope tied around his neck. Frozen in his place by the terrifying sight, Otis could not move. A frightened, sick feeling began to churn in his stomach. The shouts of "cattle thief!" and "outlaw" seemed all too clear now,



and Otis could stand it no longer.

He turned to run back through the crowd but the mob was too fierce now. He knew he must find another means of escape. As he looked around he saw that there was only one way - he would run along side the gallows to the end of the gulch. Losing no time at all, Otis darted out of the crowd, running as fast as he could down the front of the gruesome wooden structure at his side. He ran so hard that he never looked up again. Back up Simon's Hill he ran, until he could see the dirt street of town. He did not stop to see if Mr. Pickering's Drug Store was closed. That didn't matter at all anymore. All he cared about was his home.

In a moment, the town was merely a blur in the distance. All out of breath, Otis was forced to slow down. He nearly collapsed on a large rock at the side of the narrow path. No matter how hard he tried, he could not get the awful picture of the gallows out of his mind. After resting for a few moments, Otis remembered the bag of herbs. He felt inside his jacket for the

pocket. Nothing was there! Too tired to realize the importance of the missing parcel, he thought little of it. All he could think about was the shouting crowd and the fashionable gentlemen.

Otis got up and ran on. He tried to run harder to forget the day's event, but only became more tired instead. Finally, as he slowed his pace and looked around the bend, he saw a familiar little cottage. Never had that sight looked so comforting and secure. Here he was isolated from the harshness of the mining camp; he was home!

As Otis staggered into the farmhouse yard, the rickity door swung open and his mother's voice could be heard. "Why, Otis, What's the matter, son?"

Crying, he ran up the steps and into her arms, yet said nothing, for somehow he knew she would understand.

## THE TWENTY DOLLAR NIGHTGOWN

By Suzi Husman

Suggested by  
Ed Jasper

The trail wound steeply down the side of the mountain. On each side of it lay pine trees that dropped their needles, covering the red clay of the path. The pine needles sent up a pungent smell as Ward Pike slowly made his way down the trail.

Ward's horse and clothes told a lot about the kind of man he was and the type of life he lead. His horse needed a good brushing and was none too well fed. The saddle had been mended here and there. The bridle leather was worn and cracked with age. Ward's clothes were patched in a makeshift fashion. He wore a fancy shirt that was old and yellowed. The pants he wore were clearly made for someone else. A hat that was too large topped it all off.

But Ward Pike was happy as he rode down the mountain. He was on his way to town. In town many things waited for him. Practical jokes could be played. Best of all, perhaps a bet could

be made that would put some gold into his pocket. There were other ways to get money too. . . .

You see, Ward Pike was a thief --- but not just an ordinary thief. He enjoyed stealing, and most of all he liked to fool people. Ward was so good at this that he hardly ever had to work like most people did.

The horse plodded along as Ward thought about what he would do when he reached town. He rode along and thought, and by the time he reached town he had an idea.

It was just dusk as Ward reined in his horse in front of Charlie's Saloon. He tied the horse to the hitching post out front and went inside. There were only a few men inside because most men were still working at the gold mines. Charlie, the bartender, was wiping glasses as he stood behind the bar. The bar itself was really just a long board laid on top of two barrels.

Ward nodded hello to the men as he



walked in and then went to the bar. Charlie stopped wiping the glasses. He laid the grimy cloth down and asked Ward if he wanted a drink.

"A whiskey," said Ward.

Charlie looked him in the eye and said, "I'd like to see your money first." He had given Ward drinks before and knew that Ward had many ways to avoid paying. Ward laid the money on the bar. Charlie carefully put it in his money tin before he poured the drink for Ward.

Ward sipped the drink slowly. As he drank he talked to Charlie. The bartender started wiping glasses again as they spoke. Ward boasted about all of the jokes he had played on people and how well he could trick people. Charlie finally got tired of hearing Ward's bragging and told Ward that he wasn't as tricky as he thought he was. They argued about this until they agreed to a bet. Ward bet Charlie that he could steal the nightgown off of Charlie's wife without her knowing who had done it. Charlie would pay him twenty dollars if he did this, and Ward would pay Charlie the twenty

dollars if he could not do it. Ward had to do it that same night.

As Ward left the bar, Charlie smiled because he thought that he had already earned twenty dollars for himself.

It was dark outside as Ward mounted his horse and rode toward Charlie's house on the outskirts of town. He rode slowly and began to make plans. When he got near the house he stopped his horse and tied it to a nearby tree. Ward then sat down, ate a little dried beef he had with him, and waited until all the lights blinked off in Charlie's house.

As soon as he was sure that Charlie's wife was in bed, he quietly made his way to the yard where the ducks and chickens were kept. Ward knew that the bartender's wife was proud of her ducks. He got into the yard as the fowl began making a big fuss. He grabbed one duck and hurried out of the yard just as the light came on in the bedroom of the house. Ward quickly shushed the bird and sneaked up near the house. When he had crawled up near the

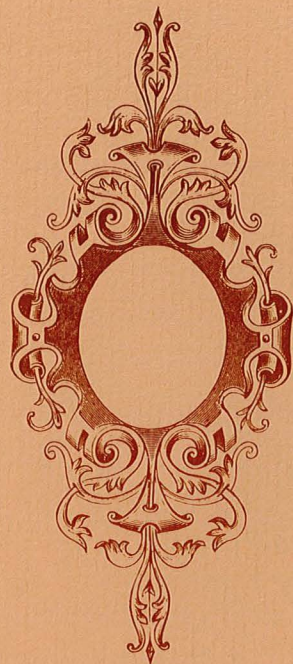
bedroom window he let the duck loose. It began to run around and quack loudly. Charlie's wife, who had been wakened by all the noise, came to the window to see what was the matter. She opened the window and leaned out. Ward reached up and grabbed the back of her nightgown. He pulled hard, the cloth gave way, and he tumbled backwards. Quickly he ran around the house and back to his horse.

Ward was in high spirits as he galloped back to Charlie's Saloon. He marched in and proudly put the nightgown on the makeshift bar. Charlie stared at it for a minute and then quietly set a twenty dollar gold piece next to it. Ward pocketed this and then told the whole story to the curious men in the bar. Shortly, he left and went back to his little cabin, gloating over the way he had earned twenty dollars.

In a little while, Charlie's wife stormed into the bar. She told Charlie about what had happened. Charlie asked her who had done it. He hoped that she had seen Ward so that he could claim his money back and win the bet.

But his wife said, "I didn't see who did it, but I sure smelled him!"





## “SECRET GOLD”

By Sue Smith

Excited screams came from the lively game of “Old Sow” in the field behind the school house. Not far away the older boys were playing a serious game of baseball, their last practice before the big game with the nearby school on Sunday. A group of girls was trying to get a game of “Dare-Base” started before recess was over. Among the manzanita bushes, just out of sight from the watchful eyes of the teacher, Josh was not listening to these sounds, for all of his senses were focused on his lone marble in the circle.

Josh had joined a couple of the other boys in the gambling game forbidden at school -- Marbles for “Keeps”. Now his chance was gone and his most prized marble was left in the game waiting for the next player to take his turn. To the other boys crouched around the circle, Josh appeared surprisingly calm during this climax. Yet inside, he was far from relaxed. Every

As suggested by Andrew Cadamartori,  
George Hoeper, Ken Castro, Dr. Coke Wood

muscle was so tense, that his body was beginning to ache all over. His heart was thumping in his ears so loudly, that he did not even hear the teacher ring the school bell to call them all in. His eyes were glued to his favorite marble. Time was running out. The other boy shot and Josh’s marble bounced out of the circle along with the tug, leaving the circle empty. With a yelp of victory, the boy grabbed his newly won marble and dropped it in his marble bag as he and his friends ran to get inside on time.

Josh did not move for several seconds. Then suddenly he became aware that he had been holding his breath in excitement, and he let it out slowly as he stood up. He wiped his sweaty hands on his levis, brushed the reddish dust from his knees and headed toward the classroom that was still in confusion from the afternoon break. As he slid into his place, the teacher called the class to order and the last



lessons of the day began. Disappointment overshadowed Josh's mind, and he could not concentrate on his work. Why had he even asked to join them in their game anyway? He had known that they were much better than he. He could hardly wait until class was dismissed for the day.

On Saturday afternoon Josh was still disappointed. Sometimes he was able to sneak into the boarding house dining room when the boarders were eating dinner. Tonight he didn't care. His mother was too busy serving the hungry miners to notice him curled up at the bottom of the staircase, listening to the boarders, as he examined his marbles. He was not very good in marble games, but he loved to play by himself. How he wished he had not played last Friday!

The young boy's sandy brown head was bent over a cat-eye marble. It was one of his most precious ones. His mother had given it to him after his father had died last year. Suddenly he heard someone mention his old friend Buster's name. What were the miners saying about his friend now? Buster was a black man and did not

talk much about his past, so most of what Josh knew about him was through the miners' gossip.

Buster was often the topic of conversation. Much guessing was done about the gold he had. The mysterious part was, where was it hidden? People said that Buster would loan a large sum of gold for money to a needy man, if the man looked as if he was honest and could be trusted to pay it all back. Buster always asked the man to return the next day, when he would have the gold ready. During the night, he would leave his cabin and disappear among the bushes and trees, reappearing later with a sack of gold. Some, who were greedy, had tried to follow him, but all attempts had failed for he was spry and cunning in spite of all his years. And he could outsmart any one! How he could disappear so easily was a great mystery to all! As the story was told, old Buster had always been gratefully paid back all of his money.

The miners liked to dream about what they would do if they found Buster's gold someday. Josh listened and continued playing with

his marbles. Then the room gradually became quiet and all eyes turned toward Charlie, a young miner. His eyes were full of glee as he told a tale he had heard up at Mokelumne Hill a few years before. Charlie leaned back in his chair and lit his pipe. The story was about an escaped slave called Amos, who came out to California to mine gold to buy his freedom. "When Amos came into Moke Hill, he liked the lively, booming town, and since the prospecting looked good in that area, he decided to try his luck. Amos came upon a group of miners just outside town and asked their advice about where would be a good place to stake a claim.

Now everyone knows that if a man has any sort of clue about a likely gold pocket, he certainly would not pass up the chance to take it himself. He sure wouldn't tell a perfect stranger, an escaped slave no less." Charlie paused to relight his pipe. "The miners laughed among themselves and decided to play a joke on the black newcomer. They pretended that a certain hill, not far away from town, had a good chance

of containing a large gold pocket. When they told Amos this, he wanted to get started right away. The men enjoyed the joke so much that they even offered some of their own equipment to Amos to help him get going! The men continued to laugh over this joke for the next couple of days. They even told their friends about it. You should have seen the look on their faces when, several days later, Amos came back into town with good size gold nuggets that he wanted to invest in more supplies for his booming business up on the hill!"

All the miners in the boarding house laughed heartily over Charlie's story, then all began talking at once, full of more stories that they had heard.

Later that night as Josh lay in bed, he could hear the thunder outside and see the lightening flash across the window pane. Rain was beginning to fall and between claps of thunder, he could hear a dog madly barking. Josh snuggled farther down under his sheet and thought about the story he had heard Charlie



tell about the slave who struck it rich over at Moke Hill. This story fascinated Josh because he knew that Buster was once a slave, too. What's more, Josh and Buster shared a secret. Buster was saving all his gold to pay for his Mother and Father's freedom, so they could come out west and join him. Years ago he had found enough gold and had sent it to the slave owner, but the man was dishonest and kept the money without setting the old couple free.

Yet Buster was a determined man and continued to mine for more gold to try again. Only this time he was going to have his lawyer friend handle the money so his parents could be released. It was just two years ago when he finally had enough gold again and made arrangements, only to find that too many years had gone by. His parents had died on the rugged trip out west; they had grown too old to survive it. The news was hard on Buster. He was no longer a young man himself. But he continued to mine each day, saving Sundays for visits with Josh.

Sometimes Josh would spend all day following Buster around his cabin, helping with little things. Other times they might go fishing, or just out for a walk. Often people would see the old man and his dog walking with Josh along the ridge above town. Of course, when Josh's mother heard about this friendship, she tried to talk him into finding some friends his own age. "What could you two possibly have to talk about all day?", she would ask. "Lots o' things, Mom. . . Like mining, trapping, fishing, and secret stuff." The remark about the "secret stuff" always made her curious, but that is all Josh would ever say.

It was getting late, and Josh had almost drifted asleep when he heard a lot of commotion going on downstairs. It sounded as if the men were going somewhere. The pounding of rain and the rumbling of thunder muffled up the words, making them hard to hear. His eyes were too sleepy to open so he did not feel like going down to investigate. His mind wandered back to the story again. He secretly wondered if Buster was not the same man who hit it lucky at Moke

Hill and for some reason changed his name when he moved on. He would have to ask Buster tomorrow. . .

The next morning the storm had moved on and the skies were bright and clear blue. Right after breakfast, Josh slipped out the side door and headed for Buster's cabin. They had planned to go fishing today and Josh could hardly wait! He was so excited that he broke into a little trot every once in a while to help him get there sooner. When he got to the top of the hill above the old man's cabin, he made the shrill whistle that Buster had taught him, calling his second best friend, Pepper, Buster's faithful dog. Then he headed downhill to meet the dog on the way. But he came to the clearing and still Pepper had not come. Feeling that something was wrong, he cautiously neared the cabin. His heart was beginning to race and his tan, freckled face was losing its color. Suddenly the door opened and out stepped a lady carrying a large bag. She saw Josh and told him he had better go back home because

Buster was not feeling well. But Josh felt he must hear what had happened to his friend, so he asked more questions until the lady finally told him briefly what had happened:

"Two men had broken into Buster's cabin last night. When the miner came in, they tied him up and began to torture him to make him tell where his gold was hidden. Buster refused to tell, so they continued to beat and torture him. Meanwhile someone heard Pepper barking on and on, so a few men went up to see if things were okay. As they neared the cabin they could hear Buster crying out in pain. They sent back for more men and quickly rescued Buster." At this point the lady dropped her voice and continued, "Many people had gathered by the time the fight was over and they were very angry. Before the night was over the two men who had been so cruel to Buster, were hung. Their graves are under the big oaktree on the other side of the creek."

The lady had just brought Buster some food and checked his bandages. She was on her



way back home and again told Josh to do the same. He pretended to head home, but then circled back to the cabin. Buster was asleep, but Pepper was glad to see him. He sat on the porch thinking and petting the old dog for awhile. Then he headed back on home with a heavy step.

After a month or so, Buster was back out there mining again. Josh would spend more and more of his spare time with the old man. He became an important helper to the old miner, for Buster never fully recovered from that terrible night.

Years later after Buster passed away, Josh found a wife and they fixed up Buster's cabin for their family. People say that for the rest of his life, no matter how good or poor the mining was, Josh always had "just enough gold to get by on." Whenever he needed money for his family, he would disappear for awhile during the night and return with some gold. His wife never asked him questions, for everyone knew it was a secret he and Buster shared. Josh could

have taken that gold and become a very rich man, but instead, through the years, he put back every bit he had "borrowed" from Buster's gold.

The secret hiding place may be in a rotten tree stump, or under a marked rock, no one knows for it had been a secret never told. To this day, people are still searching for Buster's Gold.

## "THE GODDESS OF LIBERTY"

By Jo Anawalt

The summer haze was just beginning to touch the last days of June in Murphys. Elsie pushed her shoulder against the cold stones of the Wells Fargo office. Her brown eyes were fixed on the dainty black carriage and chestnut mare the Widow Mitchler had so proudly tied up outside her hotel. The sight made Elsie sigh slightly to herself. The long walk back to her mountain home never bothered her before. But now the afternoon seemed hotter and her basket of groceries became heavier than usual.

"Elsie. . .Elsie Russell! We've been looking all over for you!" a strange voice suddenly cried behind her.

Elsie quickly turned around and found two red-haired young men grinning at her. Without a word, she instantly snatched up her basket and darted down the board-covered sidewalk. The escape however, was quickly stopped by a grab at her calico print skirt. The jolt shook the

Story suggested by  
Anne Segale and Ed Jasper

grocery basket from her hand and into the dusty street below. Looking at the scattered mess of jars and cans, Elsie's eyes began to swell with tears.

"Ah, I'm sorry Elsie," the tallest boy, Amon, said. He offered her a dusty hankerchief.

But Elsie found no comfort in Amon's apology. "Just leave me be!" she sobbed. She bent down to collect the mess of strewn goods. But Tony, Amon's younger brother, was already on his knees stuffing the basket for her.

"Come on Elsie, we're not trying to pester you," Amon exclaimed. He hesitated a moment then added, "In fact, I have some good news to tell you."

At the moment Elsie suddenly forgot her tears. "What did you say?"

Amon smiled and continued, "You know the Fourth of July is coming up in a few days.



Well, Tony and I have been working around a bit, collecting a few votes, and we think. . .", he paused for a second. "We think we've got you placed as the Goddess of Liberty this year."

Elsie glared at him. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. To be elected the Goddess of Liberty was the greatest honor a girl could hope for. It was her duty to reign like a queen over all the events of the Fourth of July celebration. The colorful big parade down Main Street, the foot relays and horse races, the patriotic speeches and the grand dance in the special pavilion constructed just for that day, all regarded the Goddess as the highest center of attention.

But the lucky girl elected to such a title was always very pretty and popular. Elsie knew she had neither of these qualifications. The plain mountain girl, that all the town's people believed Elsie to be, had never even dared to dream of such an honor. She was so thin that her dress could be wrapped several times around her. Her face was blotched with a solid

mass of freckles, despite vain and burning attempts to remove them with weekly scrubbings of camomile tea.

"This has to be some terrible joke," she thought. Picking up the grocery basket that Tony had packed, she exclaimed, "I want no part of your foolin'!", and started her way down the boardwalk.

"Hey, wait a minute Elsie! We're dead serious. With a little cleaning up and the pretty costume on, you'll be lovelier than ol' Martha Dunbar was last year. Why, right now you could shame any girl they'd elect in Angels Camp."

Tony's words made Elsie stop and burst into a fit of laughter. "Pretty?" she giggled. "Why, I'm as pretty as the 'mountain goat' you people are always calling me?"

Amon could see that Tony's flattery was a little bit over done. But Amon was quick and clever enough to take advantage of the situation.

"Elsie, don't you have a lick of confidence?" he cried. "I thought you'd be different from the rest of the silly girls in this town. They

see the Goddess as only a chance to dress up in front of everybody. They show themselves off like a fancy doll. I thought you, Elsie, would be more honest and dignified--really put some meaning into the role. But, I guess I was wrong."

"Wrong!" Elsie cried. "What gives you the power to say that!"

She glared fiercely at Amon. "I bet I could be the best Goddess of Liberty this whole county's ever seen! I'm. . ."

"Ok, Elsie," Amon interrupted with a smile, "I know you will be." He gave a slight nudge to Tony and the both of them personally escorted Elsie all the way back to her father's mountain cabin.

Murphys always had the biggest Fourth of July celebration in the county. The preparations became more elaborate every year. The special pavilion constructed on the Dunbar's empty lot, was even bigger than the one used for the last occasion. The long structure, covered with pine and cedar boughs, looked very much like the Indian counsel house up on the

rancheria or reservation near Murphys. Several benches and a speaker's platform had been set up inside. Mr. Dunbar had invited a congressman to come all the way from Sacramento and give a speech in the pavilion that afternoon.

Mr. Senter donated several large water-melons from his store to feed the crowds. He took a special trip up to the ice storage house in Averys to make sure the melons could be kept ice-cold and juicy for the celebration. The smell of wild raspberry pies and jams filled every kitchen. The ice cream churner always needed a hand to turn the crank. But the job always finished quickly. The rich and creamy results were just too good to delay.

The big parade itself was busy organizing at the lower end of town. Spectators from all over came early to get a good view and to watch some of the last details made before the parade's start.

Elsie's heart was pounding so loudly that she thought someone might hear it. The bolt of white satin material wrapped around her felt not



and uncomfortable. This costume was so confining that she was unable to climb into her place of honor on the float without the help of a couple of members from the town band. The float was just an open feed wagon draped in red, white and blue material. Elsie stood alone on a high platform built for her. The height made her a bit dizzy. But she found if she stared straight ahead, the feeling would ease just a little.

Below Elsie, one each side, were two lower platforms. Here sat several schoolgirls all dressed in white gowns. Each represented one of the forty states the union had at that time. A blue banner, with the name of a state, was draped across each of the girl's shoulders.

"Here is your crown, Miss Liberty," Tony exclaimed. He reached up and handed Elsie a gold paper crown, flowing with many colored ribbons. She almost lost her balance trying to fix the huge crown on her tiny head. Finally, she tied two loose ribbons, that hung to the side, around her chin.

"I think we're ready to start now," said

Mr. Dunbar. He was to be the driver of the six horse team that pulled the float. He climbed into his seat and handed Elsie a heavy staff that carried an American Flag almost as large as she.

"Use this to help your balance," Mr. Dunbar exclaimed. Seeing the signal for the parade to start, he gave the lead horse reins a snap.

As the horses started forward, Elsie quickly learned what Mr. Dunbar meant by keeping balanced. The wagon shook violently with every turn of the wheel. Elsie gripped on to the heavy flag staff and anchored her feet as firmly as her strength would allow. Throughout the whole length of the parade, her only thought was the fear of slipping off into the sea of giggling little girl-states below. Elsie gritted her teeth so tightly that, from a distance, she appeared to have a simply radiant smile.

The crowd of excited spectators buzzed with comments as she passed.

"Who is the Goddess this year?" someone asked.

"Why, that's Elsie Russell," someone else answered.

"Elsie Russell?" another replied. "Why, that can't be her! She's too pretty."

"No, I'm sure that's Elsie. But see the way she carries herself. . .so proud and straight. And that smile certainly shows she's enjoying herself," still another exclaimed.

Elsie's "spirit" seemed to surround the whole procession she led. The horses lifted their heads proudly to display the red, white and blue ribbons that decorated their bridles. The Miners' Union, all dressed in uniform plaid shirts with red scarves around their necks, marched to the spirited beat of the town band. The children's choir of the Congregational Church sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" four times over. Each rendition was so lively that no one complained of the repetition. Several other floats, local bands and groups were in the parade, but none seemed to leave as much impression as the "Goddess of Liberty."

When Elsie's float stopped at the close

of the parade route, Amon and Tony were there to help her down off the wagon. Elsie was overjoyed to be on the firm ground again and to be relieved of that heavy flag.

"You were simply beautiful Elsie!" Amon beamed. "So tall and proud up there." He glanced at the empty platform and his mouth dropped open.

"Elsie!" Amon gasped. "What happened to your special stand? How did you ever manage to stay up there!"

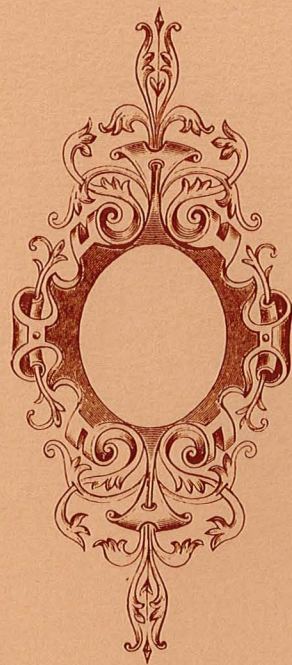
Amon pointed to the empty wagon. Someone had forgotten to set up the special wooden brace that kept the Goddess secure on the shaky wagon.

Elsie shook her head and smiled.

"I guess I really am part 'mountain goat' at heart," she exclaimed.

With that, all three of them burst into laughter.





## A STAR ABOVE BALD MOUNTAIN

By Anne Bailey

Morning was always a very exciting time of day for Alvin. But this time of the year it was especially nice. It was only four days before Christmas, 1898. The house was buzzing with the excitement of the season. Alvin's younger brother, Mark and sisters, Jean and Becky had watched one particular tree grow all year long. Now it would only be two more days before their father would chop it down and bring it into the house. Popcorn, candles, and the biggest red berries growing on the bushes around the house, would give the tree its Christmas costume.

This Christmas, more than anything, Alvin wanted a red wagon. A particular red wagon, at that. Each time he got into Sonora, he would check the dry goods store to see if it was still there. It was the most magnificent red wagon Alvin had ever seen. From the first time Alvin saw it, he knew it had to be his! If only his

From tales told  
by Alvin Sylva

wishes would come true. He could imagine himself pulling dirt, groceries, or even his sisters around in it. Not many of his friends had red wagons and he would be so proud to pull one down Washington Street.

Alvin's family lived about a mile out of Sonora, to the east, at the base of Bald Mountain. His father owned the finest dairy around, and every morning since Alvin could remember he had been getting up at the crack of dawn to go with his father to deliver the milk to the people of Sonora. His father would load the cans of milk into the wagon, and Alvin would climb into the seat and off they would go toward town.

It was a peaceful ride to town. Birds and animals rustled in the quiet. Fog wound its way around the trees and shrubs, and the crispness of the air made Alvin's nose tingle. Bald Mountain Road was a good place to explore. He and Mark, Jean and Becky came to the road often in the



spring to fly kites and in the summer to swim. The road ran across Washington Street just above Sonora. He could always hear the hustle and bustle of the little town when he came to this crossroad.

Washington Street was the main street in Sonora, and most of the business was carried on there. Stores opened early in the morning and were ready for business by the time the milk wagon arrived. Alvin's father rounded the corner at the north end of Sonora and halted at St. James Church to make his first delivery. Alvin took the reins so his father could walk and laddle milk for the rest of the morning. Each customer would greet Alvin's father with pitcher in hand and he would dip his quart laddle into the can and measure it out at 12¢ a quart.

After delivering to the Reverend's wife, on down Washington they moved to the Elite Ice Cream Parlor. Ice was a very rare thing in these times, but there was no other way of keeping things cold. Nothing would keep from

spoilng for any length of time, that is why milk was delivered fresh to the customers twice daily. Today ice was available and Mr. Jennings, the owner of the ice cream parlor, called to Alvin's father, "We'll need some cream for ice cream today Mr. Sylva."

"Ice cream" thought Alvin, "a special treat for the whole town!"

Onto Jackson Street they wheeled. Further down the block Maggie, an old Irish woman shouted, "Alvin you come in here, I have something for you."

Alvin bounded off the wagon and headed for the front door. He had a good idea of what Maggie had for him. Inside the warm cozy kitchen the aroma of freshly baked saffrin cake filled the air.

"You sit right down here and eat this," Maggie stated as she pulled the chair toward the little kitchen table. A huge piece of cake and a freshly poured glass of milk awaited him.

"Thanks Maggie," Alvin said.

Maggie was always doing good things for

everybody. She had no family of her own and it seemed to Alvin that she adopted everyone. Alvin was one of her favorites. His dark hair and eyes and his interest in everything happening around him won the hearts of many of the people on his milk route.

Alvin and his father rapidly made their way in and out of the homes and business' on and about Washington Street. As the courthouse clock struck eight, Red, their horse, headed back up the street toward home. They arrived back at the dairy just in time to pick up Becky and Jean and head for school. Mark was only five and still too young to go with them. Alvin left Becky at her first grade classroom and Jean at the third grade door and he entered the room marked fourth grade. He liked school most of the time, except when health and spelling came around. In health, Alvin couldn't figure out why he had to have one thing from each of the four food groups. He knew that his mother didn't have one of those charts from the text-book pinned in her kitchen cupboard. He was

much more interested in outdoor things and exploring.

When the bell rang at four o'clock Alvin headed home to again help his father milk the cows and load the wagon for the second delivery of the day. Today when he got home things were not the same. His father had left in the middle of the day on the train to Stockton. He went on business and would not be back until the following evening. Alvin would be delivering the milk by himself today. This was nothing unusual for Alvin. He had done it many times. He loaded up the wagon and was off to Sonora by 5:30. Alvin liked delivering at night because there were more things to see and more places to deliver and he liked it even more when he could go by himself. This way he could take his time and spend a few more minutes at his favorite places. He was just finishing with the ice cream parlor when the wagons of timber were being brought into the Lumber Mill to be cut. This always fascinated Alvin because of the way the horses were trained to come around the sharp



turn at the Episcopal Church by "jumping the rail." There were six horses and only one man and one lead line. The front two horses were trained to jump away from the line and direct the wagon around the sharp turn, Alvin had never seen them miss! He wished he could train Red to do that. But Red was just an old plow horse, and never would be special to anyone but Alvin.

The City Hotel had just opened a week ago and Alvin was anxious for this chance to be by himself so he could peek into the saloon. Alvin had seen plenty of saloons (there were at least twenty-five on the street) but he had heard this one was something special! The manager of the hotel waved to Alvin from the second floor.

"Good night Mr. Bloomby," called Alvin as he replaced the empty milk can with a full one. He put the can on the wagon and Red started off.

"Whoa boy, I want to have a little look at this new place." Alvin stretched to see over the doors -- it certainly was something special!

The bar was made of fine wood and waxed to shine. Three huge sparkling chandeliers hung from the ceiling and the bartender had on a tie and long-sleeved white shirt. Three black men played a guitar, bass and clarinet and there were many card games in progress. Alvin longed to get closer, but Red was getting impatient and the sun was getting low in the sky.

At the Gem Cafe his Chinese friend Hop Chi was already waiting at the door. Hop Chi was the cook at the cafe and liked to talk to Alvin when he came by.

"Where is your papa?"

"He took the train to Stockton this afternoon," called Alvin from the street.

"Give these to Red and come inside for some pie." Hop Chi handed Alvin some carrots for the horse and beckoned the boy inside. Alvin loved coconut cream pie and Hop Chi always had a piece for him. He brought the milk in and began enjoying the pie.

"What happened today?" asked Hop Chi as he added more wood to the fire. Alvin told

him about Maggie's saffrin cake, the ice cream, the health lesson he had at school and the City Hotel's saloon. When he finished the pie he thanked Hop Chi and said good night. He hurried through the rest of his deliveries. Despite his rush it was 7:30 by the time he turned on to Bradford Street toward the jail. It was late and his mother would be worried. As Alvin approached the jail he heard singing. Inside the jail there was a Christmas tree all decorated, as Alvin's would be, and his friend Maggie, the Irish woman, was leading the women's club and the prisoners in singing Christmas carols. Alvin could hardly believe his eyes. The infamous outlaw Dirty Jake was singing too! He didn't think a criminal as mean as he even knew about Christmas.

"Come on and join in Alvin. Put the milk down here," Sheriff Wesley said.

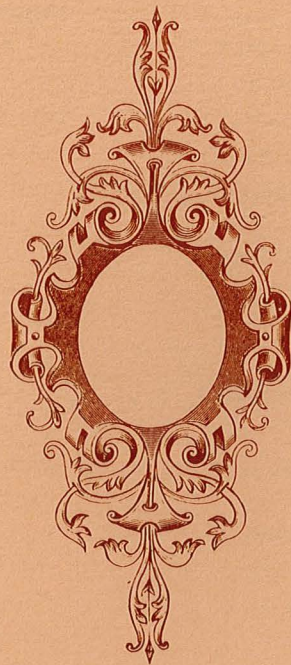
They all sang two or three carols and ended by singing "Silent Night". During the last verse Alvin took another quick glance at Dirty Jake. A single tear had formed in his eye and was running down his unshaven face. The song

ended. Everything in the room was still. Everything inside Alvin was still too. Alvin turned to look back at Bald Mountain. A single star hung shining in the sky. Christmas had really come to the Mother Lode.

Christmas morning Mark was up first. He called to everyone at the top of his lungs, to come down to the tree. When Alvin arrived he could hardly believe his eyes -- the red wagon sat beside the tree, with a huge green bow around it. He could feel the lump growing in his throat. It was beautiful and sleek and more magnificent than he had dreamed. Alvin's Christmas wish had come true.

As he promised, he gave everyone a ride in it, even his mother. That evening in front of the fire he huddled close to his father. This Christmas would be one he would remember always. The red wagon was only one reason it was special. Alvin would always remember a tear in a cruel eye, and the bright star hanging over Bald Mountain.





### LURINE'S NEW DOLL

By Jeannette Frerichs

It was raining softly. The snow on the ground was melting in great white piles along the road and against the houses. Arty and Lurine Wellington were getting their snow shoes and heavy clothes on to take the long walk to the mine to deliver their father's lunch.

The year was 1910 and the Cornish miners were working the mines in Soulsbyville, California to get precious gold. The families had come from England, thru the Isthmus of Panama, to make their fortunes and to escape the poor conditions where they were living. However, in their new home the miners worked underground seven days a week, twelve hours a day and were paid two dollars and fifty cents a week. This was not much money for a family with children.

The noon meal was a warm and welcome treat. Mother Wellington was just taking the Cornish pasties out of the oven and wrapping

From stories told by Lurene Pierson, Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Richards, Miss Leila West, Mrs. Alan Grant, Mrs. Don Segerstrom and Mrs. Wm. Coffill.

them carefully in newspaper and a red napkin so they would be steamed perfectly for Father. She packed them in the blue agate lunch box and poured the warm coffee into the special top of the container so Father could feel the warm drink trickle down his throat as he was munching on the meat, potatoes and turnips in the pasty.

The children were carefully bundled into an assortment of family clothes and off they started down the trail as Mother Wellington called, "Now be careful of your Father's lunch! I've put in two extra berry pasties for you so before you put your Father's lunch on the skip to go down in the mine, you may take out your treat and eat it while you are resting."

The two children walked along the pathway, feeling the cool rain on their faces and stopping for a handful of snow, occasionally, to throw at the nearest tree, always being careful of the lunch pail with the lunch for Father.



They passed the red school house on the hill, and as this was Saturday, they could pass it without going in. They saw the bell on the top of the porch and the small buildings out in the back. "Sure wish summer vacation would come and then we wouldn't have to do 'rithmetic,'" said Arty.

"Well," said Lurine, "the arithmetic wouldn't be so bad if we had more room to figure on our slates. That darned long division goes off the board and I lose my place. It isn't even Christmas, how can you look ahead to summer Arthur. I suppose girls do like school better than boys."

Soon they passed the church and that reminded them of the best fun of all. . . Christmas!

"I sure hope I get a top for Christmas," said Arthur. "Us boys love tops!"

Lurine thought for a moment and said, "My doll is all broken and the company store has a beautiful doll in the window. I wish I could have her for Christmas, but Father says he does well to buy food for us. Maybe the mine superintendant's daughter will get her. We have so many children in our family and she is an only child.

Her father is so important. He will probably buy the doll for her. I would call it Aretha if I had it and I would make beautiful dresses for her. She could sleep beside me and cousin Hazel. I would play with her so carefully. Hazel has a doll with real hair that she shares with me. I love Hazel so much. . . she's my best friend! I'd share anything with her!"

The children walked on down the pathway towards the mine and soon saw the sign: BLACK OAK MINE, shaft depth - 1800 feet. As they approached the mine, the train stopped at the Black Oak Station and the engineer went ahead to pull some trees and rocks off the track. He saw the children and called out, "Don't go near the mine little girl! You know girls are bad luck near mines. Tommy Knocker's get busy when girls are around. They may blow out the candles or loosen the scaffolding if you go any nearer!"

So Arty told Lurine to wait at the station while he took the lunch pail and delivered it to his Father on the skip, where it would be lowered to the work area, many feet below. Before placing

the lunch pail on the skip with the other lunches, he removed the two berry pasties that Mother had made for their treat and walked back to the station where Lurine was resting on a bench. Just then the mine whistle blew twelve o'clock! Arty sat down beside Lurine and together they ate their juicy berry pasties as they watched the skip lowered beneath the ground, carrying the lunches to the miners below.

As Christmas time grew nearer the children thought and talked more and more of the good times that were ahead. Lurine dared not say too much about the doll she would call Aretha but she thought about her and wished for her, especially as she pressed her nose against the store window where Aretha sat surrounded by other toys. Lurine imagined that Aretha would sit beside her at the table at dinner time. . . she imagined what fun it would be to cuddle with her in bed and she imagined how she could sit in the rocker and hold and rock Aretha to sleep. Aretha's eyes would close and Lurine would put her in her bed, ever so gently so Aretha would not awaken. Oh, how

she wanted Aretha for her very own!

Arthur thought of a new top, six new marbles and a new ball to play "ante" with over at school. But he was too busy playing to dream much of days ahead.

And Christmas did come and the Wellington family got ready for the big event which was the party at the church on Christmas eve. The one tree in the town stood in the church, gayly decorated with popcorn and cranberry strings. It stood from floor to ceiling and was put up by the church men who cut it from the woods. The smell of fresh fir filled the room and the children gathered around the tree in the excitement and anticipation of what was to come.

As the Wellington's entered the church hall, the brass band was playing English Christmas carols from the balcony above the door and the kerosene lamps in the hall flickered like the lights in the children's eyes. Mother and Father Wellington joined the other parents on the hard wooden benches and the children examined the packages, large and small, under the tree to speculate which



was theirs.

The minister stood up in front of the gaily decorated room and welcomed one and all. All the children sat on the floor at his feet and he told the Christmas Story. Then some children spoke pieces about the Baby Jesus and the Cornish quartet sang Christmas songs brought from England by their ancestors. Everyone sang carols and then the minister called each child by name and gave him his one present and a stocking with a delicious orange and some hard candy. The excitement was almost more than the children could bear.

Arthur opened his present. It was a blue top! "Just what I wanted!" he gasped. Lurine opened her present. She got a pair of long black stockings to keep her legs warm at school. The disappointment was over-whelming but she blinked back the tears and when the evening was over she went to her room and prayed that somehow, some way she might get her beloved Aretha.

The next day was Christmas Day and the Wellington's attended church together. They came home to a roast chicken dinner, and as the

dishes were being washed and wiped and gently put away, Mother Wellington said, "Lurine, please take the garbage outside and as you pass the spring, rinse the pail clean." Lurine did as she was told and as she stooped over the water in the spring to rinse the pail, there on the grass was a sparkling twenty-five cent piece! She could not believe her eyes as she picked it up carefully. She ran to the house to show her mother and ask permission to go to the store to see if Aretha was still in the window.

Lurine was out of breath as she reached the store. Standing on her tiptoes and shielding her eyes with her hands she looked into the store window. There she was! For two months she had been sitting in that window. No one had touched her! No one had bought her! Across her dress was a sign: ~~50¢~~ now only 25¢

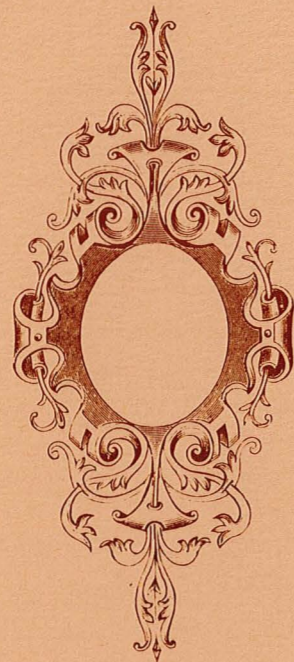
After Lurine paid for her doll, she carefully held it in her arms and soon joined the children of the town who were parading down the main street of Soulsbyville, showing off the presents they had received at the church party.

A band was leading the procession. The girls in their heavy dresses and high shoes wheeled their doll buggies with their new dolls while the boys showed their new pocket knives for mumblety peg, red wagons, wheel barrows and their marbles and tops. Lurine and Arty walked along with the other children, Lurine tending to her new doll and Arty comparing tops with his friends.

The parade ended at the Butcher Shop where the butcher came out and treated all the children to soda water and candy. Just then, Mother and Father Wellington walked up and put their arms around their children and all walked home together. As they squeezed each child a little extra, they said, "This is what we want for Christmas. Two happy, healthy children and we are so glad that Arthur liked his blue top and that Lurine did get the doll she had wished for."

The children's smiles were brighter than the sun that shining December day.





A TURTLE FOR AH CHEE  
By Carol K. Hickman

Robert hurried down to the creek to wait on the big granite rock. There was a shallow pool there where the turtles came in the morning. They would catch bugs and mosquitoes, and take naps in the sun.

He waited quietly. He was glad his family had come to Sonora. He loved the streams, and the pines, and the warm summer breezes. And he liked to watch the men mining the gold. His Father worked very hard in the mines near Sonora. He told many stories about the people that worked there, and things that happened. Mostly he talked about the Chinese. Since the gold rush a few years ago, thousands of Chinese people had been brought to work in the mines. Father had told him how one Chinese could do the work of five white men!

Kersplash! He grabbed a turtle as it swam toward the big rock. He held it carefully so he would not get bitten, and hurried to see

Thanks to Mrs. Nicolini, Mrs. Marge Coffil and Mrs. Bev Baron

Ah Chee. Ah Chee had been in Sonora since 1849, and had opened the first Chinese eating house there. Robert gave him the turtles to make soup. Every time he brought a turtle, Ah Chee would give him some sweet candies from a glass jar.

"Thank you," Ah Chee would smile at him. He would bow every time Robert brought the turtles. Robert couldn't understand how anyone could eat turtle soup. He imagined it didn't taste very good. Ah Chee also cooked wild-pigeon pies and Grizzly-Bear steaks for the miners. It was always lots of fun to watch him cook on the old stove made of creek stones and a sheet of iron.

Robert knew that not very many people were friends with the Chinese. They lived in their own part of town, and it was usually only the miners that went there. Children, especially girls, were not allowed to be there at all. But



Robert's father let him catch the turtles for Ah Chee, because he knew how Ah Chee loved the children. Just the same, Robert's father told him always to be careful, and to stay away from trouble. And there was trouble, lots of times in Chinatown. Once Robert had seen the terrifying bandits Joaquin Murietta and Three-Fingered Jack tie up as many as ten Chinese by their pig-tails. Then they would beat them to find out where they hid their gold. The Chinese would always rather die than tell where their gold was hidden.

There were other boys that brought turtles for Ah Chee, too. Also, the older ones brought skunks to the herb man down the street from Ah Chee. He made a special medicine from drying the skunk's scent bag that smelled awful. Many things in his store smelled strange and different to Robert.

Father came home that night and told mama about some trouble in the mines. He said that a lot of men were angry with the Chinese and didn't want them working in Sonora.

Father said that the Chinese worked for less money, which meant that other people didn't get hired.

"Better stay away from Ah Chee's for awhile, son, til things clear up. I don't want you to be hurt."

Robert did as his father told him. But he was sorry not to see Ah Chee. He hoped he would get enough turtles without his. Several weeks went by, and Robert heard in school one day that old Ah Chee had died. He was very sad because he had not been to see him. Ah Chee had been his friend. He knew there would be a funeral soon, and he felt that he should go. He asked his father about it.

"I don't mind if you go, son. Ah Chee would be glad to know you were there. Many of the miners that liked him so much are going to be there, also. Ah Chee certainly had many friends."

The next day Robert hurried over to Chinatown just in time for the start of the procession. Robert's Father had explained some of the

funeral customs to him last night, so he would not be frightened, or think them too strange. Now he was very anxious to see what would happen.

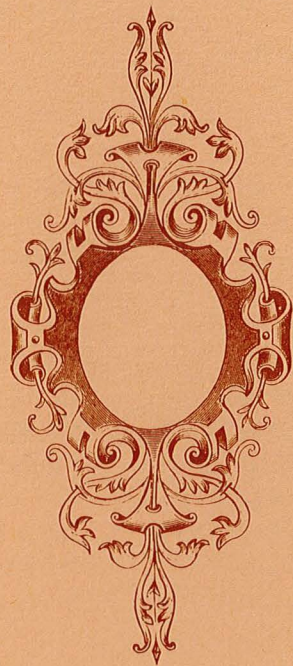
First, some men walked along and played music, like a small band. Behind them came Ah Chee's coffin on a wagon decorated in beautiful designs. Sitting on top of the wagon was the man Robert knew to be the leader of all the Chinese in town. He was dressed in beautiful robes and his head was held very high in honor of Ah Chee. Behind this walked hundreds and hundreds of people. Some were family, and some were friends of Ah Chee. Many of the people were not Chinese. Robert followed them. Everyone gathered around Ah Chee's coffin at the grave site carrying lighted candles. There was much speaking that Robert could not understand; part of the ceremony for Ah Chee. He saw some men place bowls of rice on the coffin, a huge roast pig, and some roast ducks. There were also little trays of incense that smoked and smelled sweet. Other men burned gold and silver paper over the

coffin. It was like nothing he had ever seen before! Just as it was over, a man gave a ten-cent piece to each of the white people there. Robert's Father had told him that this was to say 'thank you' to the white people who came. He also explained that the food was put there so that the man's spirit would not get hungry on the way to heaven. The candles were to give his spirit light along the way. Robert thought these things a little strange, because they were different from anything he had ever seen. But he felt certain that Ah Chee would be pleased with what had taken place that day. Robert knew that Ah Chee would be happy in heaven, but he just wished he could have done something for him, to say good-by. Suddenly, an idea came to him! He ran home.

The next morning Robert went early to the creek and caught one more turtle for Ah Chee. He hurried to the grave and put the turtle down nearby.

"You might want some turtle soup in heaven," he said, brushing a tear from his eye. Then he left for school.





## DANGER IN SONORA

By Carol Beukers

Back in the old days of California, life was greatly different. The air smelled clean, the land stretched freely and fish flopped in the streams. Stockton was a canvas town of a thousand. She had a port with twenty-five ships resting in it. Various noises from workers filled the air -- the CLICK of hammers and the grating of saws, shouts of mule drivers -- the jingling of spurs and the CLATTER of wares from the tents made that noise.

On this particular morning Manuel woke up with a smile on his face. The new sun filtered through his window, the sky looked clear and the birds sang. Finally after weeks of rain the weather had changed. For the last thirty days travel had been impossible. Every bridge and road to Sonora had been washed out.

A little over a month ago while Manuel sat at breakfast with ham and eggs, a huge man with a grizzly beard knocked at the door. He

Special thanks to Dr. Taylor, Mr. Frank McCormick, Mr. Dryer, Mr. Theodore Bhend, Mr. Woods and Mrs. Al Greene.

handed a letter to Manuel with ten large stamps on it. It came from his tio Pedro in Sonora. Manuel adored his uncle, but he often wondered how well he managed in the Gold Country. Tales reported that tio Pedro had lots of money, hundreds of canaries and a meat market on Main Street.

Upon receiving the letter, Manuel's heart leaped for joy and his eyes shone like stars. An opportunity had finally come for Manuel to make an exciting journey into the Gold Country. This would mean eight to nine days by stagecoach, little food but a *true adventure*. Manuel received immediate permission from his sister to make the trip. However, this permission was soon denied, since from that time on, the rain fell like cats and dogs making the journey impossible. Day by day Manuel's heart sank. He thought that the sun would never come out again.

This morning however, brought on new possibilities. Manuel's excitement returned all



over again. His sister gathered his things. Within less than an hour he had walked to the stage stop all raring to go. It seemed like years waiting for all the passengers to be seated with baggage secure. Finally everything was set.

The beginning hours of the journey were cold for late January, making every bit of sunshine welcome. Manuel sat snuggled in his pancho staring happily out the window. Outside the horses were having a slow, difficult time -- mud caused trouble, rocks were everywhere, and ditches had to be passed. Up ahead the road nearly disappeared from sight. The route steepened, narrowed, and became extremely crooked. Manuel soon felt his stomach jiggling. But he hung on bravely just the same.

Quite a group of passengers sat inside that stage. Mrs. Weber, an old lady with hair in thick braids woven with yarn, bright green knee socks, Mexican saddles, and piles of turquoise on her neck, spoke of nothing but her ol' mule Jim with his crooked neck. Her amazing laugh sounded more like the squeal of a guinea pig

than anything else. Then there was the merchant, Big Ben they called him -- complain, complain, complain -- always talking about San Francisco.

"That place was bad. Why it cost \$3.00 a pound for a little piece of ham, \$4.00 a can for sardines, \$8.00 a can for preserves, not to mention, \$4.00 for a bottle of brandy." It was a mean price for a meal in those days.

Across from Manuel was Mr. Foust, the Dutchman and his son. He was a wonderful man with tales and tales about gold and such. His son was an ugly little boy with gobbs of freckles. It seemed as if he slept all that first day. Because of the recent rain, it was necessary to stop before night fall. The roads were getting far too dangerous.

The next few days were much like the first. Every few miles the four to six horses were changed. The mud splashed high and passage was slow. As the end of the fourth day came to a close, Manuel found himself growing extremely hungry and he let all those around him know it. It's too bad he opened his mouth because as soon

as he had, the ugly freckled boy spread news that the Twenty Mile House up ahead had nothing but mule's livers, rawhide soup, and driftwood to munch on. But little did he know that this stop was well equipped with good grub, fine beds, and an excellent stable with friendly staff, all of which the passengers were ready for. By the end of the fourth day, the stage had reached mid-point in its journey. All were tired and ready for a good night's sleep.

With the following morning, all met for a slapjack breakfast. Manuel thought it delicious, especially with lots of syrup and golden butter! Then, before long, they hopped back on the stage again. By this time the route was much straighter and much of the mud had dried. For once, the sound of hoof clops could be heard. The country took to changing too. Cows grazed on the hills, many sparkling streams appeared and red dirt clung to the mountainsides. The stage moved on faster. As night fell, the route became so heavily populated that the trail could be traced by countless glowing campfires. Manuel felt good inside.

Each day was bringing him closer to his uncle.

On the last day of the journey, the hills looked greener and tall grass rippled. As the stage neared the town of Sonora, each passenger grew more and more excited. Even the freckled boy was awake. Upon coming to Bridge Crossing, the final landmark before reaching Sonora, the horses stopped to slurp up water. A cliff at the right of the stage revealed strong stares from all the passengers. It not only gleamed with gold but it also had some kind of Indian writing on it. Later it was reported that this was the place where the Mi-Wuk Indians had buried their last chief. Back in motion again, the road grew darker. On all sides were large, tall pines -- the air stirred everyone's nose, even the horses. At that point the stage stopped. The town of Sonora lay ahead.

A crowd stood gathered eagerly awaiting the arrival of the stage. Babies cried, mothers chattered excitedly while dogs yelped. There in the middle, Manuel spotted his uncle -- a short Mexican, with a large face and long gray



moustache, seated on a snow-white stallion. In back of him was a smaller black steed waiting for Manuel. The meeting of these two was warm and happy, each giving the other, an old-fashioned bear hug.

Uncle Pedro lived in fine style. His house was large, wooden, and white. Inside, animal heads covered the walls, a buffalo robe adorned a chair and brightly colored blankets covered the beds, a fancy guitar filled a small corner, and three black sombreros hung from their hooks. Out in back, Uncle Pedro had a wooden barn large enough to house his three horses. To the side of the house stood Uncle Pedro's surprise. Here was an eight-sided house with a front door, windows, peak roof that measured eight feet by ten feet, especially built for birds. Tio Pedro loved canaries and he had 50-65 of them. After seeing the grounds, and enjoying the birds, the sun began to sink in the west. Uncle Pedro had barely enough time to close up his meat market. Once again, Manuel was fascinated. To keep from getting hit over the head at night with cash box

in hand, tio Pedro had dug a tunnel two blocks long from his meat market on Main Street to his home. Down inside, candles were used to light the passage. Years ago when Uncle Pedro had first dug his tunnel, it had been necessary to dig around a damp old creek bed. Since then, he had no more trouble. However, the walls were still moist and scattered beams rose in support of the ceiling. They were soon home again and supper was delicious with lots of frijoles, carne and leche. Afterwards they slept.

In the morning Manuel could barely believe his ears. Outside music blared, men were singing and people roamed the streets. In the Camp of Sonora, the Mexicans worked hard and long all week, but every Saturday and Sunday they celebrated. Other camps couldn't understand it, they often complained of loud music, especially since they worked *every* day. Manuel dressed quickly. He really liked this town. No where else had he heard such music. The thought about exploring tunnels was exciting, too!

In the early afternoon, Uncle Pedro

started preparing for the fights of the bull and bear arena. Manuel's excitement rose again. Every Sunday following the morning parade, crowds of 500 would go to the arena. Men would set high bets on winning -- matching anything they could get together to force a fight. On this particular Sunday, two enormous Grizzlies named Martha Washington and Ben Franklin, had been brought in especially from Camp Columbia. Everyone looked forward to this match. Each bear had been in long time training, and they were ferocious!

Out in the arena the crowd waited restlessly. All around were men with whiskers. One rich Indian sat in his black satin vest, heavy beaver overcoat and tall plug hat. All of this was quite a sight to see! Finally waiting time was up. A grand parade came through the gates. Eight men lead by Uncle Pedro appeared mounted on gray steeds, with pants decorated in silver buttons, with silver mounted bridles, fancy saddles and jingling spurs. Upon receiving permission from the officials, the Grizzlies were

brought on and the horsemen went out. Never had the crowds seen such **HUGE BLACK BEARS**. As Manuel stared, he thought his eyes would pop out of his head. The crowd grew silent. All seemed scared. Slowly those Grizzlies approached each other. The crowd stirred. But then activity changed. Before Ben Franklin had even touched Martha Washington -- a large woman screamed, causing Martha Washington to turn and run. Wildly she crashed through the wooden fences and into the crowds. The crowd panicked. A great deal of pulling and pushing took place. Manuel tensed up, but soon he felt his uncle's hand upon him; he too was leaving the stands. Rumors say that no one knows what finally happened to Martha Washington. When people get scared they only care for their lives.

That Sunday night while in bed, Manuel lay anxiously waiting for early morn. All day long he had been wanting to explore his uncle's tunnel alone. At last it was dark enough. Without a sound, Manuel made it to the tunnel's entrance. Lighting two candles -- Manuel put



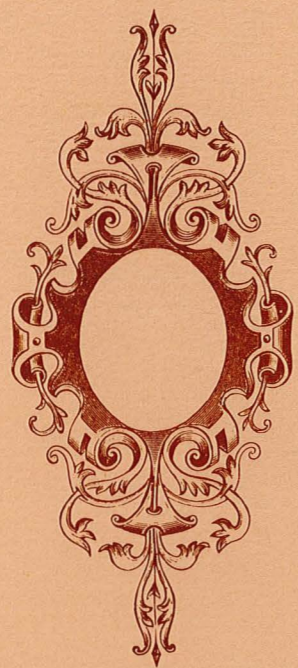
them in their steady places on the walls. Slowly he inched forward. The moist dirt clung quickly to sandals. He felt a breeze and the candles went out. Fortunately he had not gone far and finding them again would be easy. For the next five minutes he struggled in lighting up a flame. After many tries his luck finally proved successful. This done, Manuel went further into the tunnel. During the relighting of the candles, Manuel had failed to notice that water was beginning to come through the floor. By now it was two inches deep. Still, Manuel walked on. Up ahead he thought he heard sounds of fast running water. But he paid no attention to it. Minute by minute the sound grew louder. But Manuel was a brave boy and he longed for adventure. By now he was starting to have trouble. His feet were almost swimming in water. If he tried to turn back -- how long would it take? With almost every move he was slipping now. He hated the idea of his uncle finding him. Manuel stopped then and began thinking. He still hadn't seen the whole tunnel by himself, and now he was going

to -- *live or die*. Slowly he sloshed forward. And then it happened. Water gushed in on all sides! Very soon Manuel stood waist-deep in water. In minutes it might be above his head. No time could be spared. Manuel cried for help because he couldn't swim. Why had he come here? What was to happen? Water kept on coming. Manuel felt no hope. He was going to drown. By this time the water had risen almost to his neck. Still he kept on shouting. And then. . . .out of the corner of his eye, he saw a flash of scarlet, it was a man -- with the speed of lightening galloping toward him -- black jacket, tight trousers, jingling silver ornaments, sombrero over his eyes -- his hero? No it couldn't be. Joaquin Murrieta -- best friend of all Mexicans! Had he come to save him? Apparently he had been hiding from the Gringos when he had heard Manuel calling. Manuel knew his face like the back of his hand. Back home in Stockton his sister had many pictures of him. With the speed of an arrow Manuel was out of that tunnel and alive.

Months passed before the ruins of the

flood were checked. Uncle Pedro's tunnel was totally destroyed, his meat market washed out and luck had just saved his house and barn. In the midst of the flood, someone had opened the door of the birdhouse and for some years to follow those canaries could be seen up and down the Stanislaus River. As a result of Manuel's rescue, the whole town raised a plaque in Joaquin Murrieta's honor and many still talk of him today.





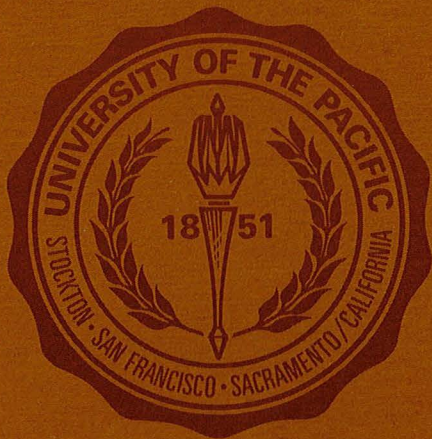




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