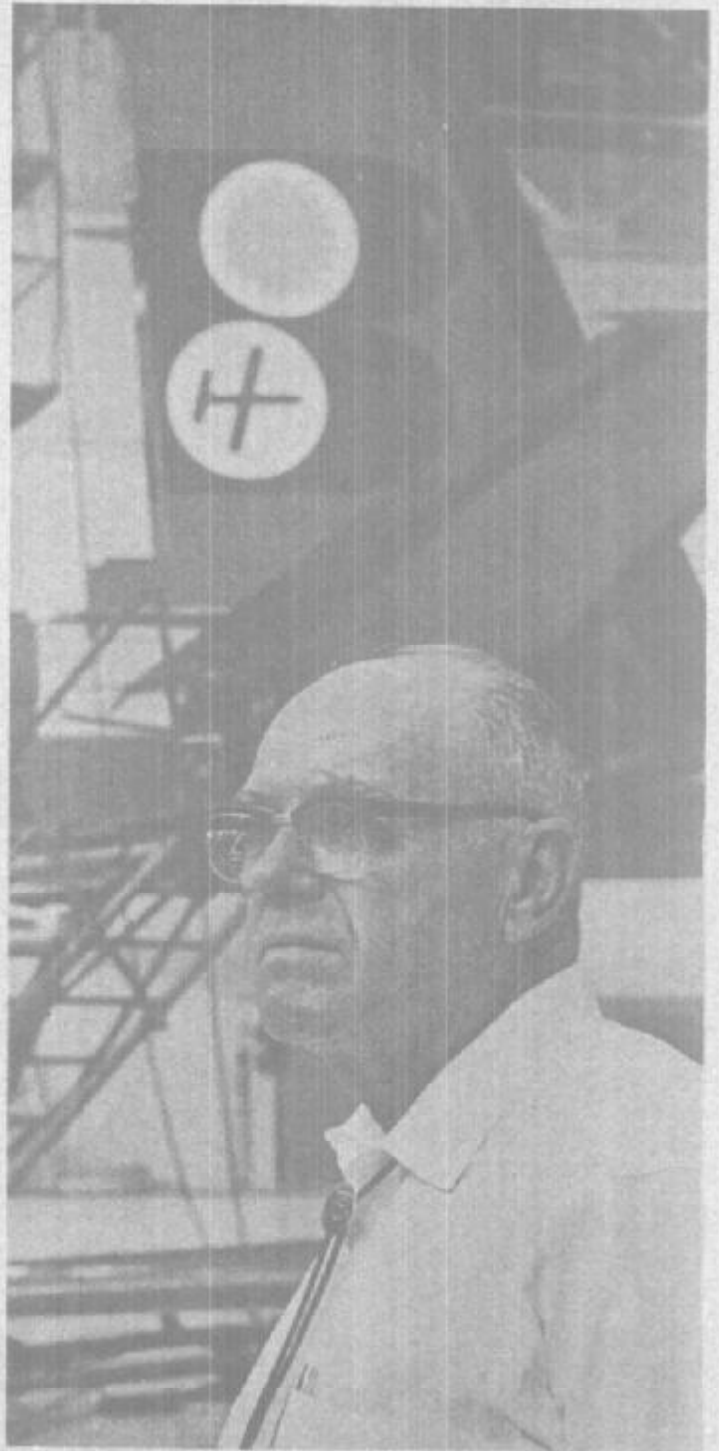
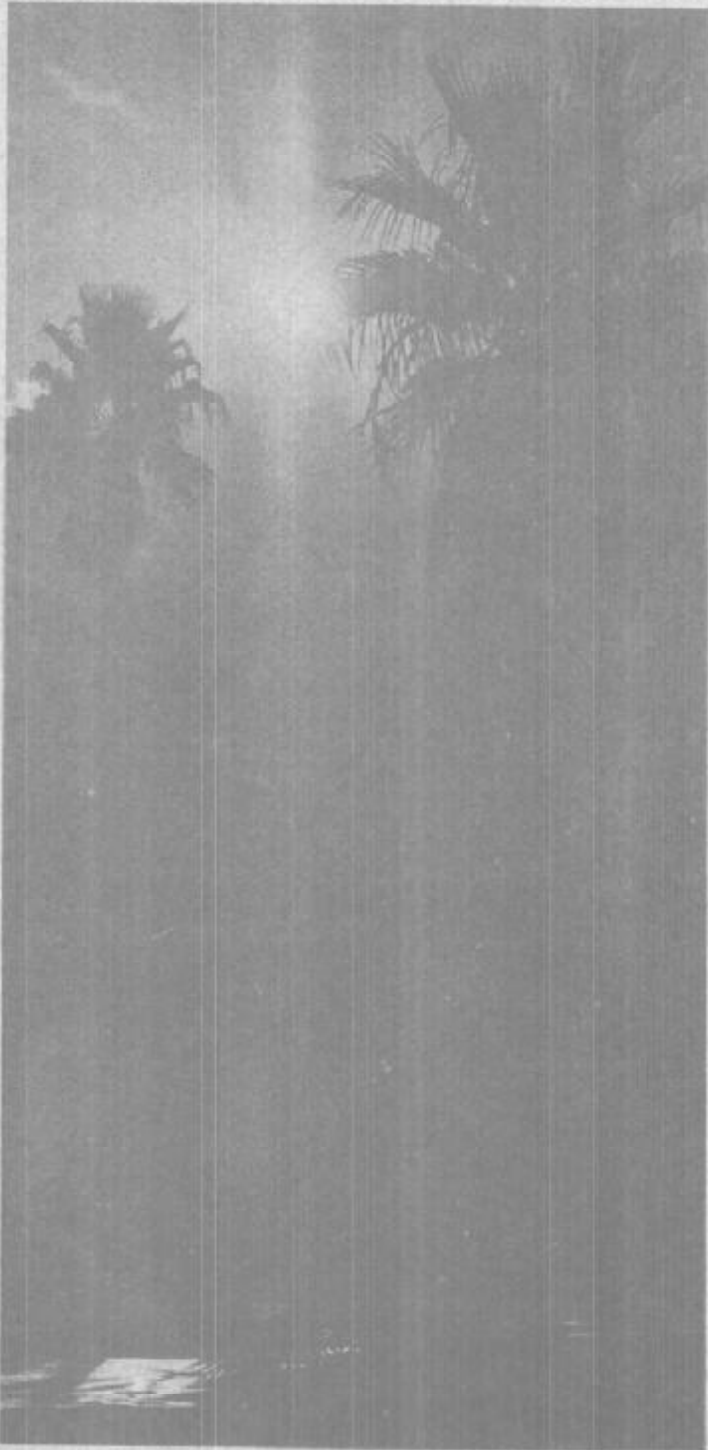


air west



by Gordon Kent

Ed Converse is a funny man.

I don't mean he's got a great catalog of jokes— he's unique funny, or maybe enigmatic funny.

The president and chairman of the board of Bonanza Air Lines took a lot of money and ran it into a fortune. He started at Bonanza's predecessor (a little flight school in what was then a small desert village in Nevada known as Las Vegas) after four years of service in the Navy during World War II by doing public relations work.

That's what I've been doing, but Mr. C. decided it's better to have people work for you than you be working for them, so he incorporated Bonanza Air Lines, a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants operation during those days in 1945.

Now, more than two decades later, after a progressive reign as Mr. Bonanza, its founder has joined with Nick Bez of West Coast Airlines, David R. Grace of Pacific Air Lines and others in a merger that will create the super-regional carrier, Air West.

How Converse got to Air West from Vegas is a singular piece of aviation history, and a story of personal as well as corporate success.

There were only ten employees drawing about thirty thousand dollars a year between them, and much of the money came from a Converse sugar bowl which has never been explained to me. So when they held an election, he was named president.

Understand, it's easy to be elected president when you're coming up with the payroll during the lean months. It's a different thing to hold that spot for more than twenty years as your vision becomes one of the most dynamic airlines in the regional service industry.

He did.

One funny thing is that he knew everybody when

there were only nine others in the company and the fleet consisted of six dinky little airplanes and a (then) big 21-passenger C-47 (the military designation of the DC-3), and he still seems to know most of the folks now that Bonanza has more than one thousand persons on the payroll and the first all-jet-powered fleet in America with five DC-9's and twelve F-27's.

Of course, Bonanza didn't sprout likewhatshe name. Growth was doubtful at first and then got difficult. For a while, that C-47 carried tomato plants from Nevada back to eastern markets and returned with raw film and eastern lobsters— probably the only airborne horticultural merry-go-round in the world.

Passenger service was mostly between Las Vegas and Reno at the beginning. And times were tough. One incident related by Converse is illuminating:

'We had a flight take off at Reno,' he recalls, 'and the tower radioed the captain that the sheriff had just driven up to report that two wanted men were aboard.'

'He flew on to Las Vegas, radioed ahead and the men were arrested when they deplaned.'

'I asked why he didn't go back to the Reno airport,' and he said, 'Ed, you know those men would have been mad, and they might have asked for refunds on their tickets.'

That's a pretty good sign that life wasn't just a bed of subsidy.

So the boss got the chambers of commerce of Las Vegas and Reno to cough up ten thousand dollars for a campaign to advertise air travel between the two cities. May, 1947, a short time after that, became the most successful month in Bonanza's brief history. The company made a small profit!

All this time, our president was wearing different



Edmund Converse,
President, Bonanza Air Lines

Designate, vice chairman of the board, Air West

hats to do different jobs. And the wives pitched in, too. Like when the C-47 came up against a headwind and was late getting back to Las Vegas from Reno.

'McCarran Airport was a bulldozer swath in the desert then, and the women would drive out and line up a bunch of highway construction lightpots to serve as landing lights,' Converse remembers.

After attending California grade and high schools, Converse went to and was graduated from Stanford University and Stanford Law School. That's probably where he developed that memory of his.

For four years, he served on the staff of U. S. Senator Styles Bridges in Washington, D. C. Next was the Navy, and after that he went to Las Vegas and gambled on air transportation while others were gambling at the casinos sprouting in the desert.

While there, he served as president of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, was a member of the Rotary Club, and served as national Republican committeeman for Nevada.

Along with Nick Bez, he was instrumental in founding the Association of Local Transport Airlines, and is a member of the board of directors of ALTA and the Air Transport Association of America.

Now, when a guy is busy with service club meetings, politics, industry conventions and all that stuff, you'd think he'd get tired of trying to run an airline, too, and maybe get mean.

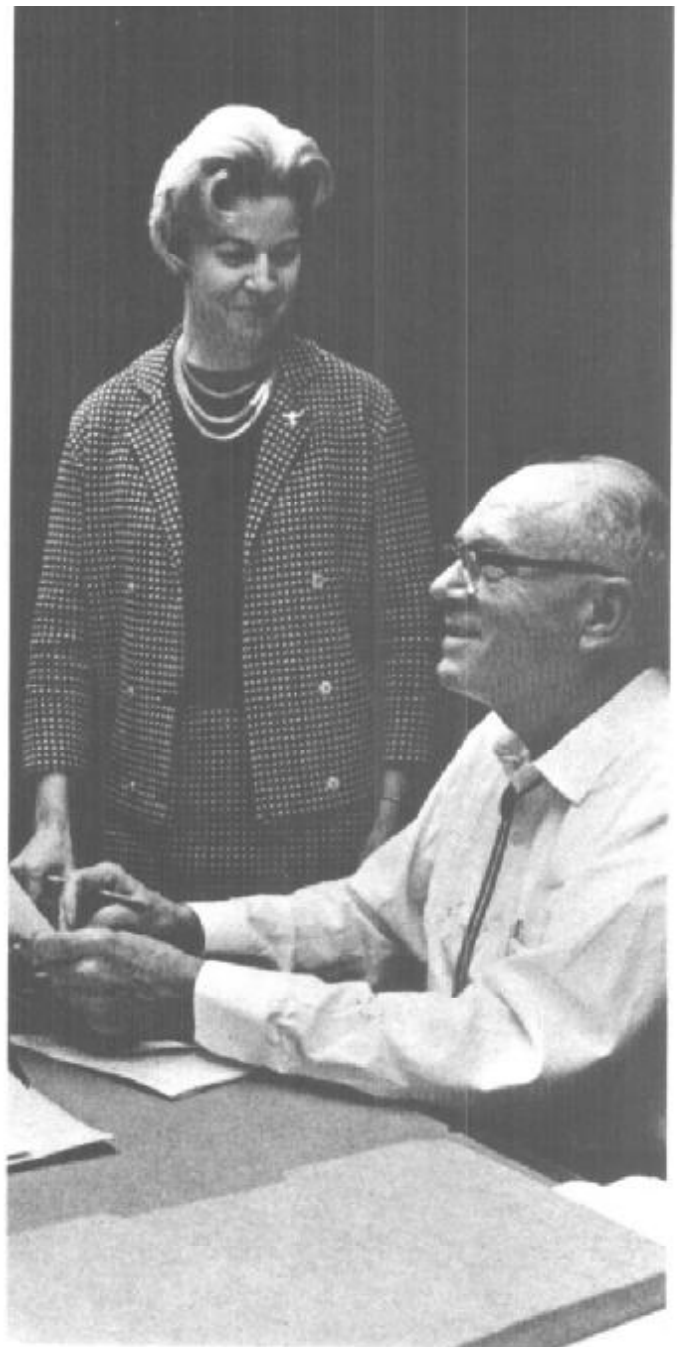
I do know that he beats his secretary.

To the office, that is. Quite frequently. That probably is how he managed to be head of the airline that came up with the first area fare in the industry, the first youth fare, and the first all jet powered fleet, and a whole slug of other ones — by stretching his workdays out longer.

At least that must be part of it. If I knew the whole answer I think I'd quit and find myself an old C-47 and start an airline and sit back and watch the company grow.

Mr. C. won't do that. He just loosens his bolo tie, rolls up his sleeves and works.

I wonder if that's the rest of the answer?



Converse's secretary, Margaret Ryan

Converse with two key department heads, Richard A. Rogers, vice president of industrial relations, and Treasurer Frank R. Chobot



with Quality Control foreman Joe Zupko and DC-9 fanjet

willa goes to palm springs

Photographs by Hugh N. Stratford

In Palm Springs, everybody talks about golf, and they do something about it, like playing the game.

What most visitors to this diamond in the desert miss is the quiet of a picnic at Palm Canyon, a few miles from the city.

So, when Willa Brown, a young lady from Bonanza's offices in Phoenix, turned up there on a day off, Air West Magazine's lensman Hugh Stratford and I showed her how to avoid the strains and sprains of an outraged sand trap.

Chester M. Glass, a Palm Springsian and member of Bonanza's board of directors, met us for lunch, joining the lass poolside at Holiday Inn Riviera. Hugh was busy taking pictures, and I was testing the water.

Next, it was a trip up the Palm Springs tram with Bob Hutchison, a Bonanza station agent in Palm Springs.

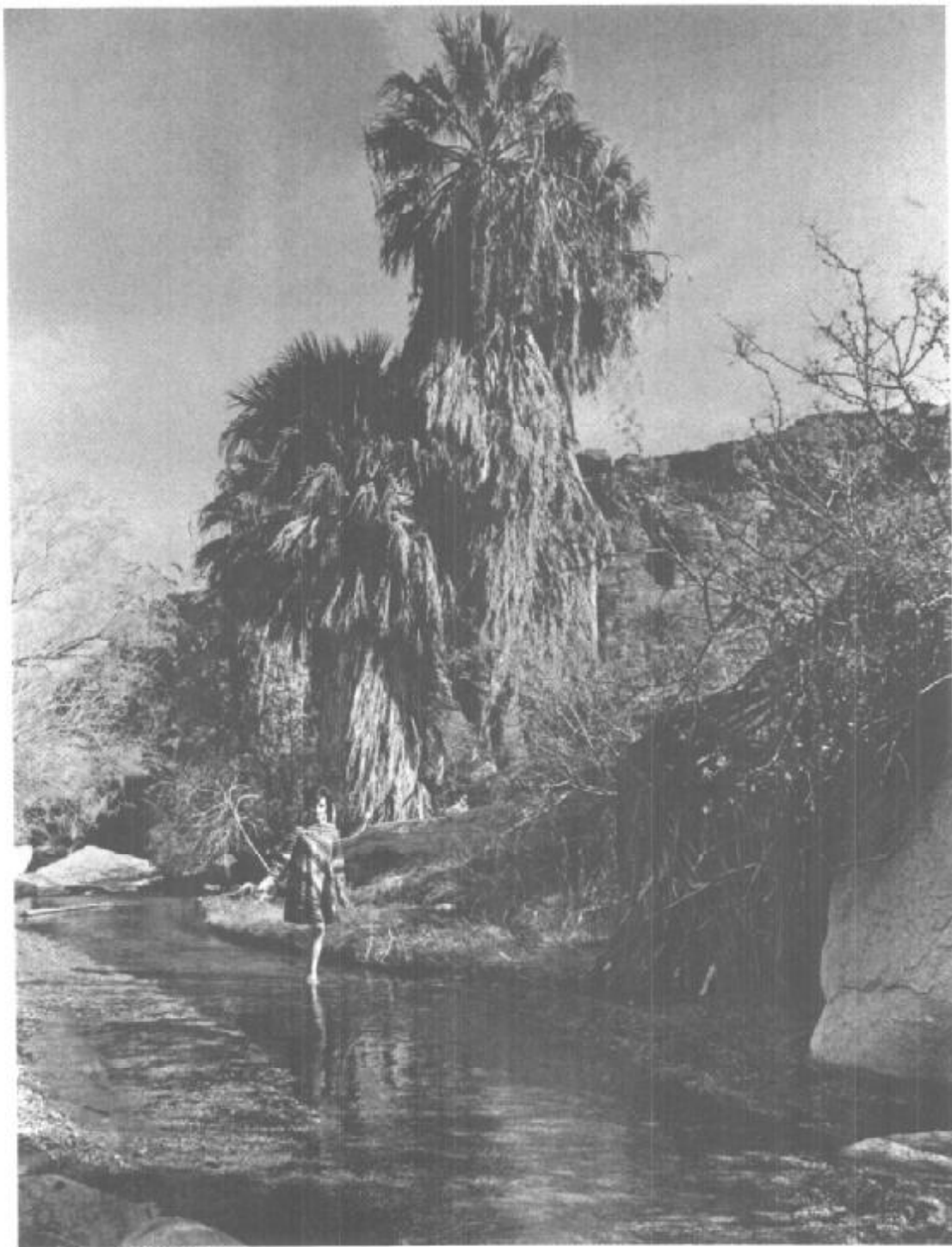
From 2,643 feet above sea level to 8,516 took just eighteen minutes—better time than any Sherpa mountain climbing guide could make on his own.

Another physically undemanding few minutes was spent at Santo's catering shop and restaurant. This comfortable little place is often headquarters for some of Palm Springs' most successful gastronomic windings. Owner Santos de Jesus and his son-in-law, Morris Soto, happily displayed their glistening kitchen in which meals for as many as 1,500 persons are prepared.

So Willa spent the whole day in Palm Springs and didn't even get near a golf course. She did wade prettily in a spring, visit a date grove at picking time, sun beside a pool, pose with oranges.

But no golfing.

—Gordon Kent



If not in heaven, a walk in paradise will do



the green below,



and Willa Brown, is paradise now



The spa is Holiday Inn Riviera; the beauty judge is Chester M. Glass Jr., a Bonanza Air Line director

Even girines people enjoy being tourists



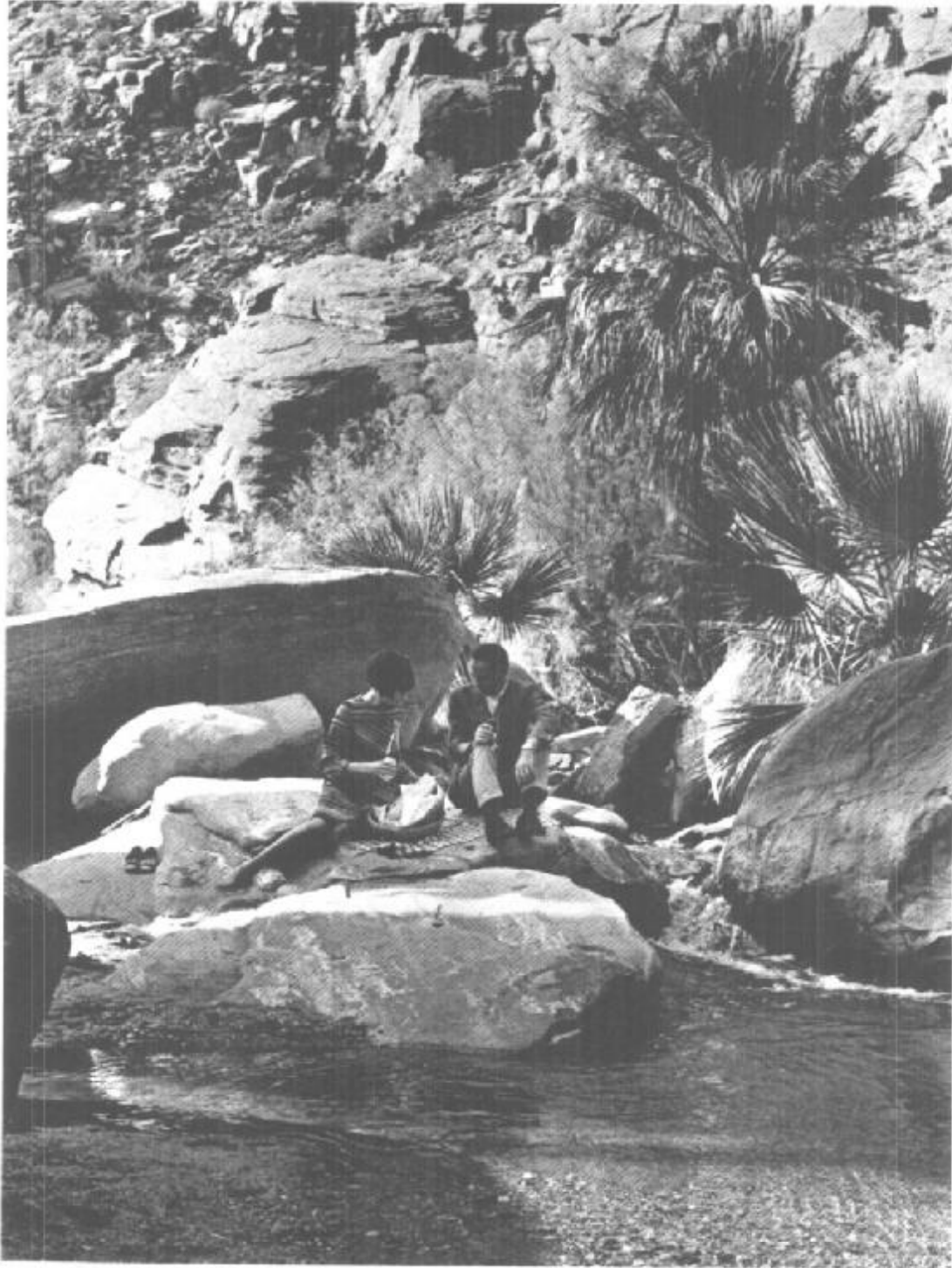
Bonanza agent Bob Hutchison and Willa browse among sightseers at the top of Palm Springs tramway



A walk in the shade of the palm date trees with writer Kent



Yes, indeed, Willa likes dates.



Barefoot in a desert park

END

A BIT OF THE OLD WEST

Say 'Scottsdale' and your listener will think of fancy dude ranches for fancily dressed dudes paying fancy prices for saddle sores and aching muscles.

But you can spend a day (and little else) in Scottsdale just 'storefront shopping'. It's like windowshopping, but rather than just peering through the glass you stand back and take in the whole pseudo-Western panorama.

As did a couple of Bonanza AirLines employees, Don Hatfield and Marsha Hewitt, on a recent winter expedition.

Since most architects of stores are these days seeking steak new materials for a shiny front, it's a dreamwalk to saunter through downtown Scottsdale, where wood is weathered with hammers and chains for a bit of Old West flavor.

Streets are paved, and the hitching post is a rare sight, but board and batten siding and adobe block buildings both are commonplace.

Here, the local go-go place is dubbed the Red Dog Saloon. Pancho Villa is a fond work by a frond-weaver who created him complete with .45 automatic and bandoleers.

The fragrance of confactions waits across the sidewalk from an 'old' country store selling horehound drops and licarice from wooden bins—the sweets having been placed there from cartons into which they were packed by an automatic machine somewhere else.

Water colors and oils, pastels and charcoal are available for those who want more permanent records of this mock longhorn town than memory allows.

So are seven-x-beaver hats in Western style from the makers who covered heads a half-century and more ago. But so, alas, are mini-dresses and micro-skirts. It's behind the storefronts the aura fades; there that history retreats instead of surrounding.

—G.K.

Don Hatfield and Marsha Hewitt review a treasure map



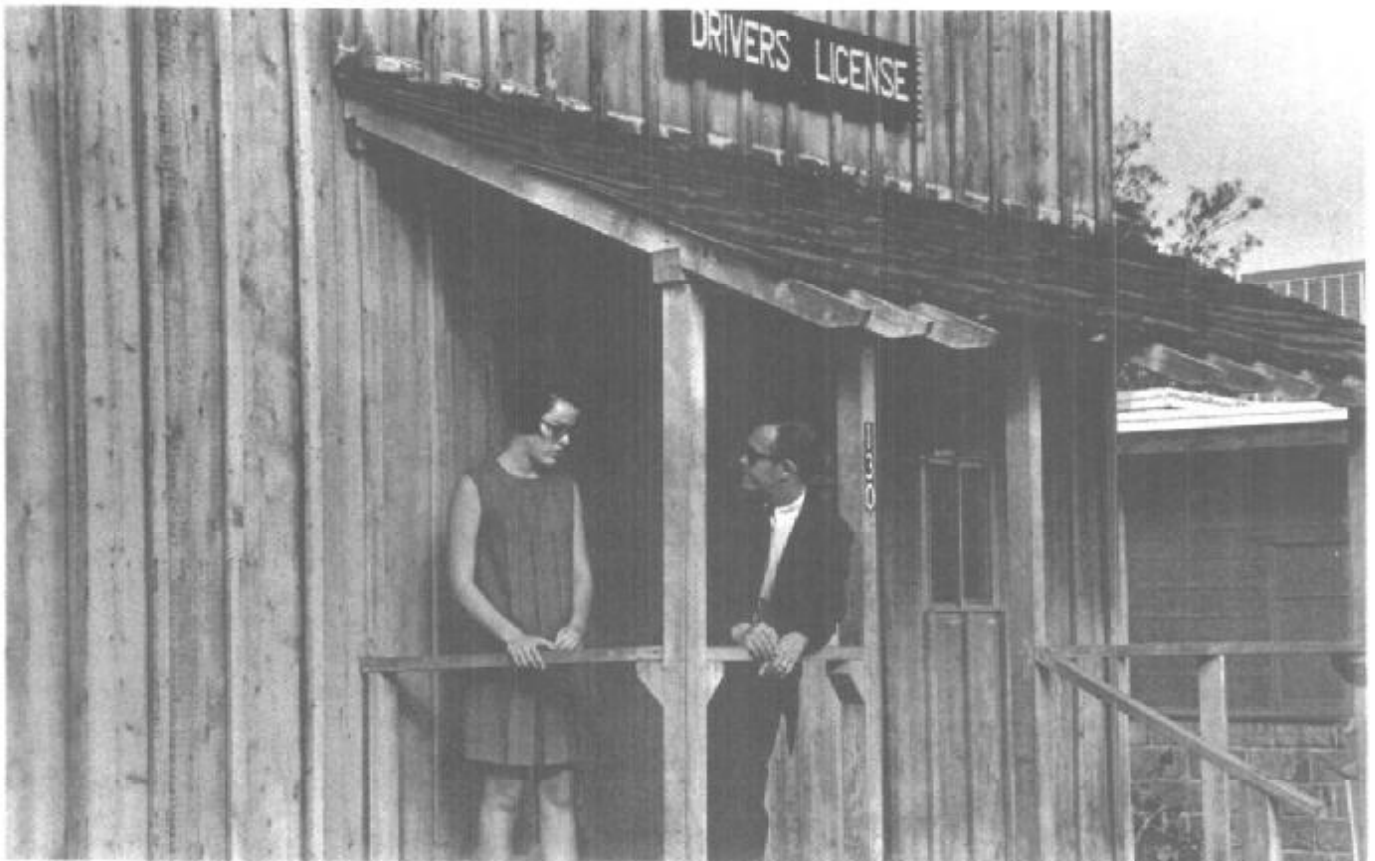
Photographs by Hugh N. Stratford

Holy smoke, he said, look at that luscious sight on the right!



Scottsdale street scene, with western wallflower

Take yer choice and take yer chance, sailor



She flunked this test, too

ERNEST K. GANN

by Emmett Watson

One of Boeing Field's most celebrated airplanes is not, as one might suspect, a new Boeing 737 or a West Coast Airlines DC-9, or any one of hundreds of planes, small and large, that land there each day. The best-known plane is an infrequent visitor, a twin-engine amphibious Royal Gull, which makes its home base at Friday Harbor, the 'capital' of Washington State's San Juan Islands.

What elevates the Italian-built Gull to a position of status among planes landing at Boeing Field in Seattle is its owner and pilot—a stocky, energetic man with a ready grin, a man given to gregariousness among fellow pilots. Most pilots who have met him would, in fact, be surprised to learn that he doesn't much like crowds of people; that Friday Harbor is, in reality, the place he

has found as a retreat.

The pilot of the Gull may well be America's best-known aviator—always excepting Lindbergh himself—and there are few people interested in flying who have not heard of Ernest K. Gann.

'High and the Mighty,' 'Blaze of Noon,' 'Island in The Sky,' 'Twilight For The Gods,' 'Fate Is The Hunter'—these are just a handful of his best-known titles. He has written thirteen or fourteen books ('I can't remember'), six of which have been made into films. The phrase, 'Ernie is the richest ex-pilot since Howard Hughes,' is correct except Ernie is not an ex-pilot. He is as learned and skilled and qualified as any pilot now flying for the airlines.

It just happens that his books, including his latest, a

Ernest Gann and ship's figurehead on veranda of combination pump/guest house at Friday Harbor



Hugh N. Stratford photos

Father Mapple would have used it as a pulpit

World War I flying novel, 'In The Company of Eagles,' sell high on the lists— thus freeing him from the necessity of sitting in the captain's seat to make a living.

'As long as I can see and hear, I'll be flying,' he says.

Two summers ago, he hired out as a pilot of Cessna 172s for the island-hopping Island Sky Ferries, which services the San Juans. Ernie still holds his ATR rating, keeps abreast of his instrument work, and has himself checked out each ninety days.

'No span of time,' he has written in 'Fate Is The Hunter,' 'is so carefully documented as the working hours and minutes of a professional pilot. The facts are firmly recorded in fine-lined logbooks, and to the initiated, the bald, uninspiring figures can easily be revived into actuality.'

With writing fame came the usual problems— finding elbow room, a place to be left alone for work. Ernie has lived in Switzerland, New York, California and Denmark; he investigated Nevada, Colorado and Utah before finding the exact spot he wanted— a two hundred acre farm on Friday Harbor. The farm now consists of a renovated home, designed by Ernie and his wife, Dody; five horses, twenty-one steers and a trout pond with six thousand fish.

It has been a productive time. In addition to writing magazine pieces (one of them, for *Holiday*, is on the SST), he is working on a TV series on flying. He also has finished his 'thirteenth or fourteenth' book, 'The 17 Wonderful Maidens'— due for publication next summer. The book's title refers to the seventeen boats Ernie has owned in a sailing life that began in 1921.

Now 57, Ernie's flying career began in 1935, an era of open cockpits, goggles and big wrist watches. In his thirty-seven years of flying, Gann has flown everything from the early Douglas DC-2 to the DC-6s. During World War II he flew the North Atlantic, North Africa, the Azores, the murderous Hump out of India. He flew as a line captain with American Airlines (at only sixty dollars more per month than he made with Island Sky

Ferries), later with the ill-fated Matson Steamship Company airline, with Trans Ocean and Polynesian airlines. When he stopped counting, Ernie had 11,500 flying hours recorded, and many of the facts, 'firmly recorded in fine-lined logbooks,' came to life in his exciting books.

He discovered the Pacific Northwest in 1950 when he came to Seattle to buy a fishing boat. One of his '17 Wonderful Maidens,' the brigantine *Albatross*, was used in the film, 'Twilight for The Gods' (Ernie wrote the script, too), which starred Rock Hudson and Cyd Charisse.

Gann is explicit on why he moved from Sausalito to Friday Harbor:

'I had to come to a place where there's some room and some nature left. I've never lived in a real America. The cities aren't the real America. New York isn't, San Francisco isn't, and I don't think Seattle is. I had to get away from places where boys wear earrings and don't cut their hair, where you can't tell the girls from the boys and you can't take a walk at night without carrying an ammonia gun for protection.'

He took the job flying for Island Sky Ferries solely to gain the proper acceptance in a small community.

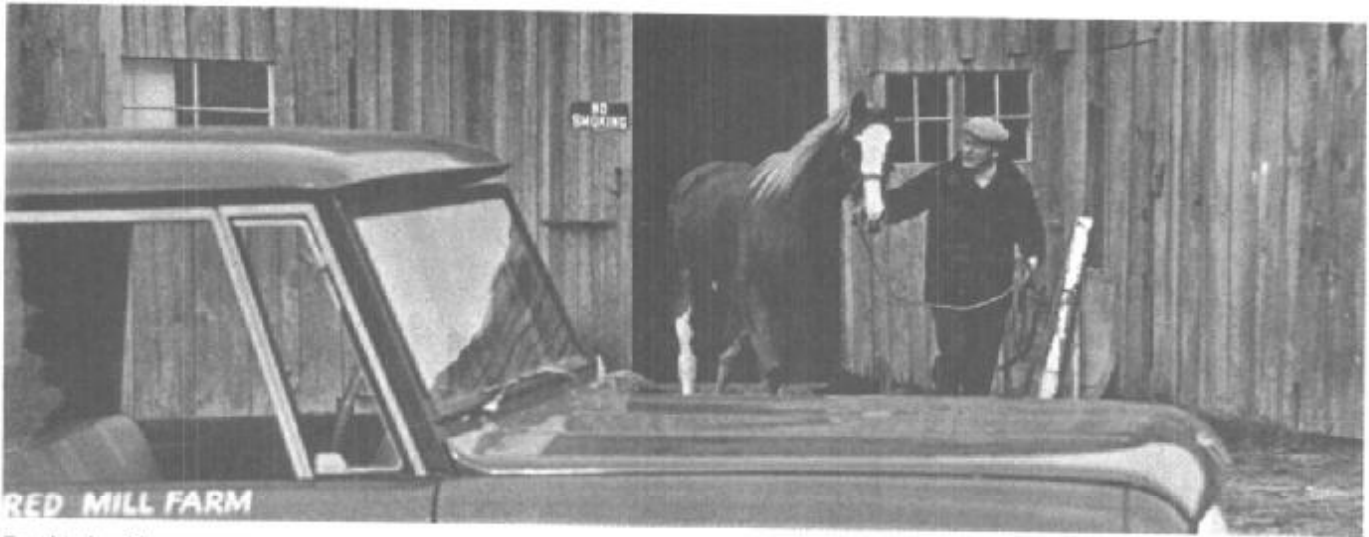
'I wanted to get acquainted here, I wanted to make friends. People see a guy working and flying, down on his hands and knees fixing something, or loading baggage, they figure maybe he's one of them. If I'd lived here for fifteen years I couldn't have made as many friends as I did by flying.'

Even at Friday Harbor, Gann's life is scarcely one of isolation. He is no more than a few hours away from any place on the West Coast; he flies almost everywhere in the *Gull*, and occasionally will hop down to Seattle just for dinner. Time doesn't hang heavy on his hands.

Mornings, he works in the small out-building which has been renovated into a studio, complete with pictures and flying and sailing memorabilia. And lately he acquired a prized possession: Mira Slovak's Bucher-Youngman biplane, a two-seat aerobatic plane.

'Flying that,' he says, with pleased satisfaction, 'is the way flying used to be— that's really living!'

Island Sky Ferries 'senior pilot'



Two kinds of horsepower

Gann handles both with ease

Jack Leffler, United Air Lines pilot, adds Gann and Pacific Airmotive's Hank Kennedy to his photo album



Gann still keeps company with the big fellows



Where the tyrant lurks

THE SNARLING SHARK

by Leverett G. Richards

Photographs by David Falconer

What has a rubber bottom, a rooster tail, two metal horns as big as cast iron skis, and floats on five feet of snow?

It's a snowmobile, the newest in INmobiles.

With its ten to twenty iron horses, this combination outboard motorboat and toboggan can skim the deepest snows, climb steep slopes, jump sixty-four feet (the current record), and tow a toboggan or an elk carcass with equal ease.

This is a sport that, at first glance, looks like riding a snarling shark.

But nothing daunts a stewardess, especially trim, charming ones like Fran Hamlin, whose accomplishments include skiing the European Alps.

So Fran, who supervises West Coast Airlines current crop of ninety stewardess, accepted the challenge of the Mount Hood Snowmobile Club and rendezvoused with a covey of these new machines-from-Mars in the Trillium Lake area of Mount Hood, in Oregon.

Here Dick Buscher, U. S. Forest Service district ranger, a ski touring enthusiast, has marked out special trails for snowmobiles and for cross-country skiers.

Fran, with airline aplomb, pulled the starter cord on the one-lunged, two-cycle engine, clutched the motor-cycle handle bars, squeezed the throttle and took off in a cloud of confidence and powdered snow, just as if she knew what she was doing.

'What a thrill!' she chortled after her first solo flight across Trillium Lake. 'Just like riding a motorcycle - or schussing Mount Baldy.'

'Any five-year-old kid can run one,' says Bob Williams of Gresham, organizer of the snowmobile rally. And he pointed to some of the fifty members of the

Mount Hood Club whose children drive the family machine.

Mark Wambold, 11, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Wambold, of Troutdale, regularly drives his father's snowbug, while dad skis behind. Mother, of course, has her own snowmobile. And no cracks about women drivers. There are a lot of them in the club, for snowmobiling is truly a family sport. Picnics in January are a standard weekend outing for this far-out crowd.

Ann Steckline, wife of Walt Steckline, West Coast Airlines, Portland city ticket office manager, figured she could learn, too.

She soloed in less than five minutes, then took photographer Dave Falconer, a fearless mountain man, for a ride. She was instructed to show off while Dave shot over her left shoulder.

She did. She hadn't gone ten feet before she flipped the slippery-bottomed machine over on its side, throwing Dave for a loop, and pinning her own foot in the machinery. There were no injuries, except to Ann's ego (such a lovely ego!), and she mounted her unruly steed for an encore.

Fran, who has skied the best slopes in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Colorado and Europe, got a new kick out of skjoring behind the flying snowmobile. Falconer's twin girls and their older sister went dashing through the snow in a cute cutter made of plastic. Others rode 'banana boat' sleds, and toboggans like dog sleds. This is the way snowmobile 'snowfaris' carry their winter camping outfits, extra fuel and survival gear.

They could need it. You can drive further into the boondocks in an hour than you could walk out in a week if you had a breakdown or ran out of gas.



Gangway for Ed Card

Mount Hood from Trillium Lake



On the trail



John Gregory and son Lou, 3, round a corner



Bronco-buster Shannon Antoni, 3, of Sandy, Oregon



Ann Steckline runs afoul of a sharp curve, thrown by Dave Falconer



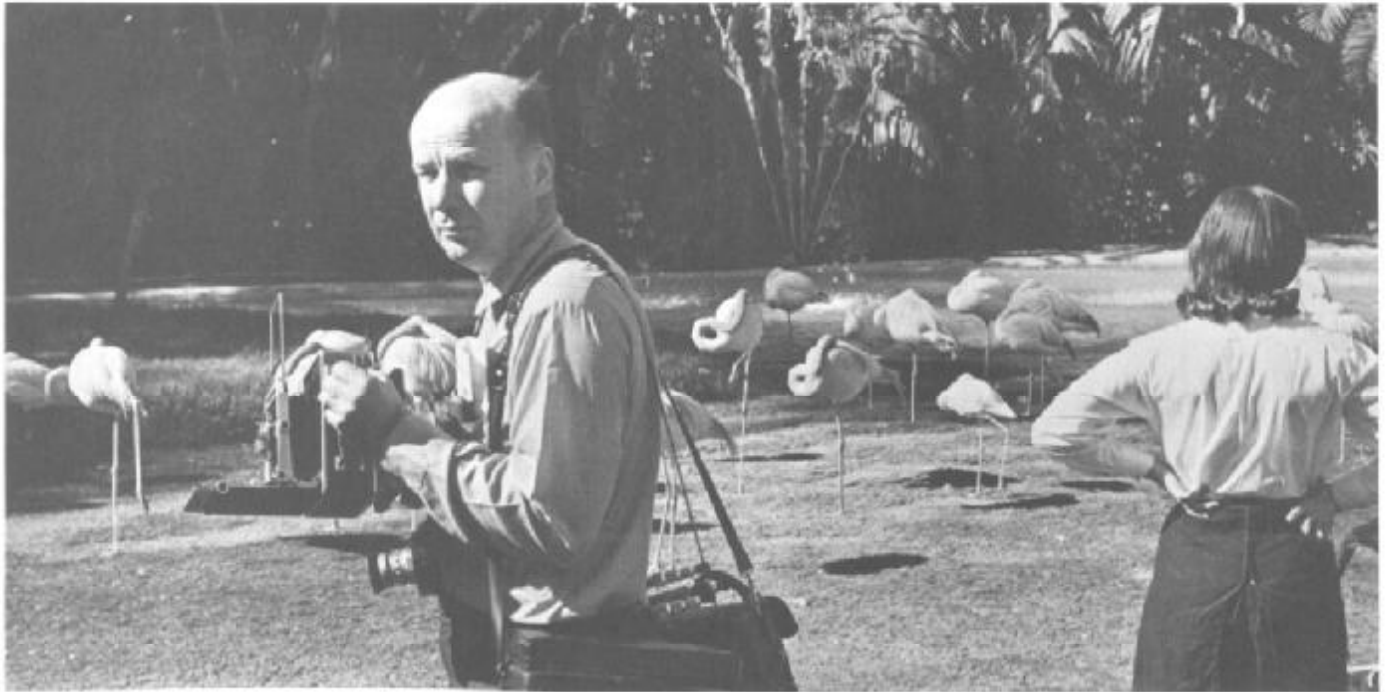
Fran Hamlin and Shirley Falconer; on the ropes



Fran and Ann take a coffee break

The Flamingo Hunter

Bob Spring of Edmonds, the noted outdoors photographer



Oscar Pearson, South African Tourist Bureau manager in Los Angeles, and Forrest Mulvane, Western Airlines news manager, prepare to fire and fall back



Emerging from captivity, Lee Tyler, San Jose Mercury travel writer,

safari to the zoo

The San Diego Zoo is the world's largest. It has one-way streets and its own slow transit system, which enables tired tourists to see the greatest number of animals with the least amount of effort.

To it last month went the Society of American Travel Writers, some of whose members have seen the wild versions in various phases of their travel careers.

One of them is Oscar E. Pearson, western America manager of the South African Tourist Corporation, whom fellow writers regard as something of a lion tamer.

Oscar led the charge, appropriately, into a section of the zoo reserved for toddlers and others who come to make their first acquaintance with inhabitants of the animal kingdom.

He and the baby elephant warily exchanged greetings at the height of which the latter nuzzled Oscar's paw — and drew a blank: no peanuts there at all.

It was all Guy Ryan, the San Diego Tribune's travel editor, could do to reassemble his fellow experts, so entranced were they with pandas, and sheep and with photographing one another. All finally escaped.

The San Diego Zoo is helped immeasurably by its terraced layout, its informative signs and clever tour guides.

The young pilot assigned to the travel writers at one point stopped on a steep downgrade to broadcast the presence, less than a gunshot away, of perhaps the world's most dangerous animal:

'The All-American Roadhog,' he called it.

The beast was escaping along the San Diego Freeway or an arm of it, hellbent for LaJolla. Since a high fence prevented their taking off after it, the writers reluctantly went back to cataloging the species still in captivity. It was a pretty close call. — dpg

Mort Catbro, Oakland Tribune, lecturing on the habits of the panda bear



Pearson cheating on elephant

Baby dell drew a blank palm



Low angle shot



Howie Clifford, Western Airlines public relations director, dares the big fellow to come closer.

Guy Ryan, San Diego Tribune travel editor greets a performer in the San Diego Children's Zoo.

WEST COAST AIRLINES

1219 Westlake North, Seattle, Wash. 98109

air west

FORTY FIFTH ISSUE February 1968



Photography

By Hugh N. Stratford of Seattle: Ed Converse, Willa at Palm Springs, Scottsdale; Ernest K. Gann
By David Falconer, Portland Oregonian: The Scurling Shark
By D. P. Gooding: Travel Writers at the San Diego Zoo

Contributors

Leverett G. Richards is aviation editor of the Portland Oregonian
Gordon Kent is director of press relations, Bonanza Air Lines
Emmett Watson is a pilot and ex-athlete who writes the column This, Our City, for the Seattle P.I.
Of him it is said: Herb Coen is the Emmett Watson of San Francisco

Editorial

Published by West Coast Airlines under direction of J. N. Bez Jr. and E. N. Altman
Donald P. Gooding, Editor, 1219 Westlake Ave. N., Seattle
Hugh N. Stratford, staff photographer; Dolly Connolly, staff writer; Harvey Kyllonen, printer
Opposite: Willa Brown and Bob Hutchison, Bonanza Air Lines employees, enjoy a day off at Palm Springs