

Ko Ko Weef Characters Can Give A Traveler The Willies

As the reader well knows, California is to many people the Promised Land. So today's charming little travel feature will describe a scenic loop through a nearby portion of the Promised Land, with emphasis on the quaint antics of certain natives in the Ko Ko Weef Mountain area. It is sincerely hoped that not too many readers get lost while following the directions herein set forth, and that no one at all gets shot.

Leaving Las Vegas your fearless reporter (that's me, naturally) traveled U.S. 95 to Searchlight, there taking a right turn on State Highway 68 and proceeding to Nipton, the kite flying capital of the Mohave Desert. At this point I had driven approximately sixty-three miles, had crossed the California line and was some two miles inside the Promised Land.

Pausing in Nipton to pick up five gallons of water, a load of beer and two stalwart guides—Red Gray and Martin "Rocky" Allen—the three of us proceeded seven miles south to a sign that said Ivanpah Road.

All blacktop thus far, and we followed Ivanpah Road three miles to the Cima turnoff, which was well marked and up to this point even the guides could hardly get lost.

At this point you are between two mountains, with Ko Ko Weef on the right. Ko Ko Weef, you may recall, is supposed to hunker over a subterranean river the bed of which is rich in placer gold. Or so some people believe.

A man named Dorr, many years deceased, claimed to have followed a cave down to this alleged "river of gold" and mapped its course for several miles underground. There are those who knew Dorr and doubt very much that he could ever have found his way out of such a cave. It is said that even above ground he could get lost walking from Ko Ko Weef to Cima, which route he traveled pushing a wheelbarrow for groceries.

In any case there are two caves high on the side of Ko Ko Weef Mountain, and trails leading to each, but unless you have somehow acquired an invitation to visit them it might be best to stay away. You are still in spooky country. In fact, you are now in the spookiest part of it.

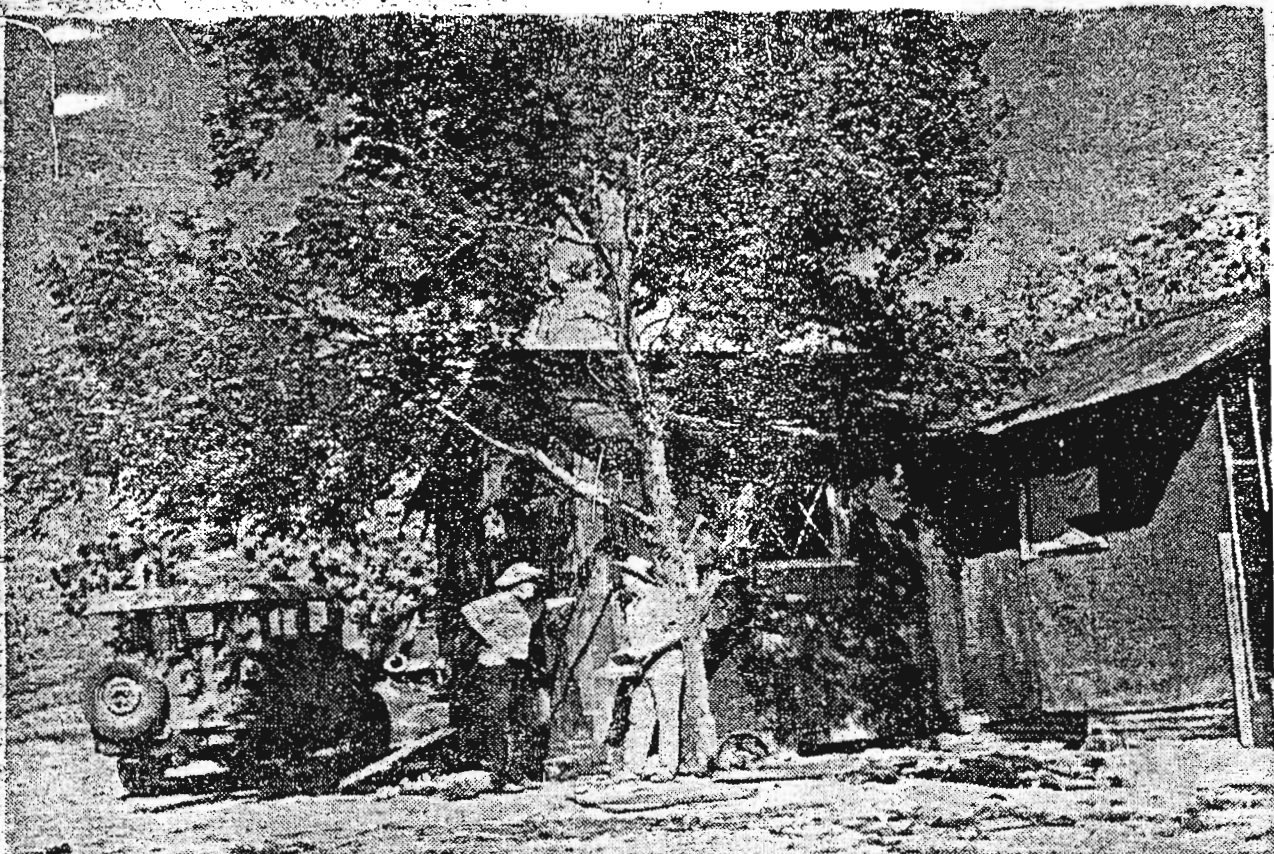
Recently a rockhound and his wife started up to the larger of the two caves and went into

near shock when a bearded man rolled through dust across the road and came to his knees with a leveled rifle in his hands. The bearded one told your fearless reporter the intruder was wearing a pistol at his side, which is considered bad manners on the slope of Ko Ko Weef.

Assuming that you have come this far through the mountains without getting lost—or shot—you will drive maybe a mile beyond the Chinese elms and take a left fork in the road. Another mile and you will see signs of civilization. The Molly Mine at Mountain Pass will be visible in the distance. Two more miles and you will come to Groner Springs with its ancient and half dead cottonwoods.

One more mile and you are on the freeway and headed home to Las Vegas. You have passed through some rare, cool country in the Promised Land, beautiful country, and quite likely your progress has been noted from the Evening Star Mine on past Ko Ko Weef.

Don't get bugged just because you didn't see any of the people who saw you.



Red Gray, left, and Rocky Allen in Spooky Area of Squatter's Roost

By Ray Chesson

Eighteen miles along the Cima road, which was mostly gravel but kept in good condition, we came upon Cima itself, a small settlement boasting a store where one can replenish his beer supply.

Already we had traversed country the desert lover will cherish, climbing gradually through a Joshua forest to an elevation of perhaps five thousand feet. Cool, friend, cool, with Ivanpah Dry Lake now far behind.

At Cima we took the Valley Wells road, still driving through Joshuas, past the Kessler Ranch, a dirt road, excellent, and presently we came upon the Giant's Bookcase. Or at least that is what Rocky called it, or them—because there were several. He cried, "Just look at the Giant's Bookcase! Wouldn't that crust you!"

Filled with enthusiasm my guides piled out of the vehicle for a closer view. The Bookcases were strange upthrusts of rock, decomposed granite split vertically and certainly resembling huge books on a shelf. Here we were in decidedly fascinating country, high desert supporting beautiful clusters of prickly pear cactus. We found cans of rations abandoned by soldiers during the Desert Strike maneuvers three years ago. We looked about for an army tank rumored to have been misplaced at that same time, but failed to find it.

Continuing along the road we came presently to a sign that said Riley's Camp. This was six miles from Cima. Making a right turn we followed this new road to the Evening Star

Mine, an impressive layout no longer in operation.

Established to produce tin ore, the Evening Star possesses many deep and unprotected shafts down which the reader can fall if inclined to fall down holes. A mama mouse with one baby lives on a shelf in a cabin. A smell of sage was in the air, and an interesting copper dump is within easy walking distance up a canyon.

Bearing north from the Evening Star Mine we drove along for perhaps two miles, maybe less, we were getting slightly confused what with so many roads running all over the landscape, and came to a sign directing the wayfarer to Ko Ko Weef Peak 6 Miles.

As stated above, there was a certain degree of confusion in our party and right along here we somehow got tangled up in a maze of trails that deposited us in an area sometimes referred to as Squatter's Roost—grand country, even better than grand, full of the clean odor of juniper but, bluntly speaking, spooky as hell.

Up here at an elevation of approximately fifty-three hundred feet were many snug little houses hiding among the juniper trees. These were not uncared for shacks. Some pretty nice cars were parked beside the houses, freshly laundered clothes hung on trees, but not one living soul was in sight.

We drove all over that place trying to get

Visitors Eyed Through 30-06 Rifle Scopes

out, knowing that any number of people were in hiding watching us, and eventually we got back to the Ko Ko Weef road.

From this point on it isn't advisable to fool around with any mines. Somebody will probably be watching you most of the time, strange and elusive characters who have been known to use the scope on a 30-06 rifle to gain a better view. Just stick to the most traveled trail and soon you will see a fenced graveyard marked Grave Site. The gravestones are country rock and one gives the name John Feeny, the date of his death, July 15, 1909. There is only one other stone, inscribed J. E. Oinn, 11-24-1927. It is possible that the stonecutter tried to spell Owen.

One mile from the Ko Ko Weef sign you will come to a sign that doesn't say anything at all. Or if it does the message is very faint. Keep driving straight ahead.

Within two hundred yards there will be another sign that doesn't say anything, anyhow at first glance, but on close examination the weathered words advise No Trespassing. Turn left.

Roughly eight tenths of a mile along this road a faint sign will read Iron Horse Mine—Carbonate King Mine—Grover Springs—U.S. Highway 91. This is your destination, U.S. 91. Again, don't monkey around these mines. Three years ago a man named Fred Benbry got a hole shot through the back of his pickup while in the vicinity of a mine in this particular area, and if they will shoot at Benbry they will shoot at anybody. Because if Benbry can see a target he will shoot back.

After another two tenths of a mile the road will fork. Choose the narrow trail to the left and drive two miles. Flat on the ground there will be a No Trespassing sign lettered in red. Turn right. You are traveling gravel trails, but good, and the family car will do the job all the way. Unless there has been a flashflood.

Now, in slightly less than a mile the road will fork, the left trail going up to a big mine in the mountains. You keep to the right. Suddenly in front of you there will be a few shacks and several healthy Chinese elms. No one lives here. It is an interesting old camp seemingly safe to examine. One might even sit in the shade of an elm and have a beer.