

I Long for That



HUMAN TOUCH

by

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THE THRILL is gone. The sight of my supermarket with its shelves filled with tightly packaged meats, cheeses, cookies, crackers and canned goods does not exhilarate me as it once did.

No longer does the spaciousness of the building nor the shiny cleanliness of the storeroom cause me to push my basket briskly down the aisles while marveling at man's contribution to shopping efficiency in the atomic age.

Suddenly I am tired of efficiency. Somehow this newest manifestation of our increasing tendency to put purchases on a production-line basis fills me with a nostalgic longing for the corner grocery where my grocer and butcher presided like benevolent kings, proudly handing out succulent vegetables and tempting cuts of meats as if they were jewels for the favored.

I long again to watch my butcher cut a thick steak from a huge haunch of beef fresh from his cooler and hold it up so that I, too, may admire its juiciness with the same pride as he.

It was a fine sight to see my butcher

work. He was an artist at the cutting block and he took care in carving tender steaks and chops, carefully trimming the fat so that they were also beautiful.

My butcher would have been humiliated to have it said of him that he did not sell good meat, for he was a proud man and as sensitive about his art as an actor of his effect upon his audience. This is why, I guess, his customers referred to him as "my butcher," just as they referred to their doctor as "my doctor."

But now, in my supermarket, my butcher has been replaced by a great many men and women — men and women dressed in starched uniforms who stand at long tables behind plate glass windows and cut and saw and grind meat all day long. They pack the meat into little cardboard boxes or vulcanize it into wax paper containers and place it in sterile-looking refrigerated shelves for me to view and choose. Who are these people? Where do they live? What do they think? I do not know. I only know that they all look strangely alike as they dutifully saw, cut and grind away behind the heavy glass.

These people do not look like

butchers. I remember that my butcher had a slightly florid face with tiny blue veins running through his cheeks. He wore a white apron which was always red-streaked from the chunks of meat he continually hauled in and out of his cooler. He always smiled and wished me good day when I came up to his meat case. Somehow meat does not taste the way it once did.

Nor does cheese. Cheese now comes thinly sliced or chopped into large chunks and tightly wrapped in wax paper.

I remember that when I had a grocer he used to keep a huge wheel of Swiss cheese on his counter. He had other wonderful cheeses, too. They came in large rectangular bricks or in big round balls and it was a delight to watch him hew off a fresh slice and wrap it in paper and tie it with a string. Somehow I get no pleasure out of opening packages of cheese any more.

I LONG again for the thin layer of gray dust which I always found on the top of each can of fruit and vegetables I used to buy from my grocer. My grocer was a clean grocer, but he was not finicky. I guess that is why he always had a few minutes to talk about the weather or baseball or to suggest a remedy for colds.

He used to keep his cookies in

large round containers with a glass top. I could look into each container and see what he had there. If I wanted to, I could take one out and try it before I bought.

I miss the smells, too. My corner grocery and meat market were so full of so many titillating odors that it was hard to identify just which food was smelling the best. Sometimes it was the big crock of sauerkraut; other times it was the white enameled tray of kosher dills in a vinegar mix, or the huge mound of freshly baked doughnuts piled near the cash register.

Most of all I miss the people who served me there. But even the friendliness and the credit extended by my butcher and grocer could not bind their customers to them in the face of the improved supermarketing. They finally sold their store to a new way of life. Today the windows which were once piled high with soap and canned goods display a few well-placed plumbing fixtures.

My grocer now works in an automobile tire factory. And I hear that he can turn out seventy-eight four-ply tires an hour, which is supposed to be a very good average. My butcher? He always was an artist at heart. He now hangs wallpaper in the homes of people who still take as much pride in viewing the results of his labor as he does in producing it.



SISKIYOU COUNTY—



Our Last Frontier

BY EDITH KERMIT ROOSEVELT

THERE was a time in 1941 when it looked as if Siskiyou County, California, would either become the forty-ninth state of the Union or secede entirely. Together with Lassen, Modoc and Del Norte Counties in California and Curry County in Oregon, Siskiyouans launched an extensive publicity campaign with the help of San Francisco *Chronicle* staff writer Stanton Delaplane and a \$500 fund supplied to the Chamber of Commerce by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors.

It started as a joke in retaliation for what Siskiyouans considered "stepchild" treatment they were getting from the state government, but the "joke" turned into a real movement as they realized the possibility of thereby forcing appropriations for road building and maintenance.

Judge John I. Childs of Del Norte was proclaimed "acting governor" and the major wire services and newsreels covered his impassioned speech at a huge rally. But just as California's Governor Cuthbert Olsen was about to end the "upris-

ing" by calling out the state militia, the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor—and the Siskiyouans called off their demands "in the interest of national unity."

It's a good thing they changed their minds. People who know that country know it might have taken more than a half-hearted attempt by the state militia to "put down" angry Siskiyouans. Scattered through this territory about the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined are 30,733 rugged individuals (450 of them, Karouck, Shasta or Modoc Indians).

The land itself is mostly wild country, with 237,527 acres of virgin forests. About 63 per cent of the area is Federal Government property consisting of Klamath, Shasta, Modoc, Rogue and Six Rivers National Forests, soil conservation projects, wildlife sanctuaries, power reserves and Indian reservations. There are countless trout-filled alpine lakes and streams, mountain meadows and dense forests of sugar pine, Douglas fir, yellow pine and incense cedar. Deep in these primi-