

# Booked for Travel

*Edited by David Butwin*

## End of a Mission?

THERE'S NOTHING like a bicentennial celebration to make a person aware of his origins. Those of us who were living the lie that California derived from the Gold Rush of 1849 or the first Rose Bowl game in 1892 or the advent of Disneyland in 1955 are learning this year to our considerable benefit that it all started with the building of a mission in 1769.

In July of that year Father Junípero Serra, a plucky Franciscan missionary, planted a cross in the hills of what is now San Diego—an event that was pretty well lost on California historians until San Diego 200th Anniversary, Inc. decided that 1969 was high time to give Father Serra his due. Accordingly, there will be cause to celebrate nearly every day of the year, whether your bag is fiestas, trade fairs, boat races, parades, golf tournaments, historical pageants, or a quiet stroll through Mission San Diego de Alcalá, whose five-bell campanile rang in the 200th birthday on New Year's Eve.

By a sad quirk of history, this very mission, the *raison d'être* for San Diego's bicentennial party, may fade into oblivion before the year is out. Missions, like Broadway shows and baseball teams, depend on box-office clout, and in the last months of 1968 San Diego de Alcalá was drawing no more than a few visitors a day, down from a peak of 1,000 per week just a year and a half ago. There is no doubt that progress, the most important product of forward-lunging California, contributed to the decline. When San Diego Stadium, home of the football Chargers and baseball Padres, was built just west of the mission, it was necessary to lay down some new roads and realign some old ones to ensure easy access to the stadium. Thus penned in by bars of concrete, the mission all but lost its address.

"I don't know how long we can afford to stay open," a young mission guide told me, his voice sounding as hopeful as a death knell. "For 198 years we were on Friars Road, and then when the stadium was built, the city put in a New

Friars Road 300 yards behind the mission. They decided they couldn't call the old road Friars Road any longer, so they renamed it San Diego Mission Road. Which was all right, except when the maps were redrawn, the mission was left out. Now the tourists have to rely on the wisdom of gas station attendants or hotel clerks to direct them here."

Father Booth, the mission pastor, proved with the publication of a new brochure that he hasn't lost his sense of humor. In careful detail the brochure describes three routes from downtown San Diego to the mission five or six miles east—the easy way, the confusing way, the hard way. Pursuing the easy way (Interstate 8 to Mission Gorge Road, north to Twain Avenue, and left on San Diego Mission Road), this unseasoned freeway voyager arrived without so much as a wrong turn or a gas station interview.

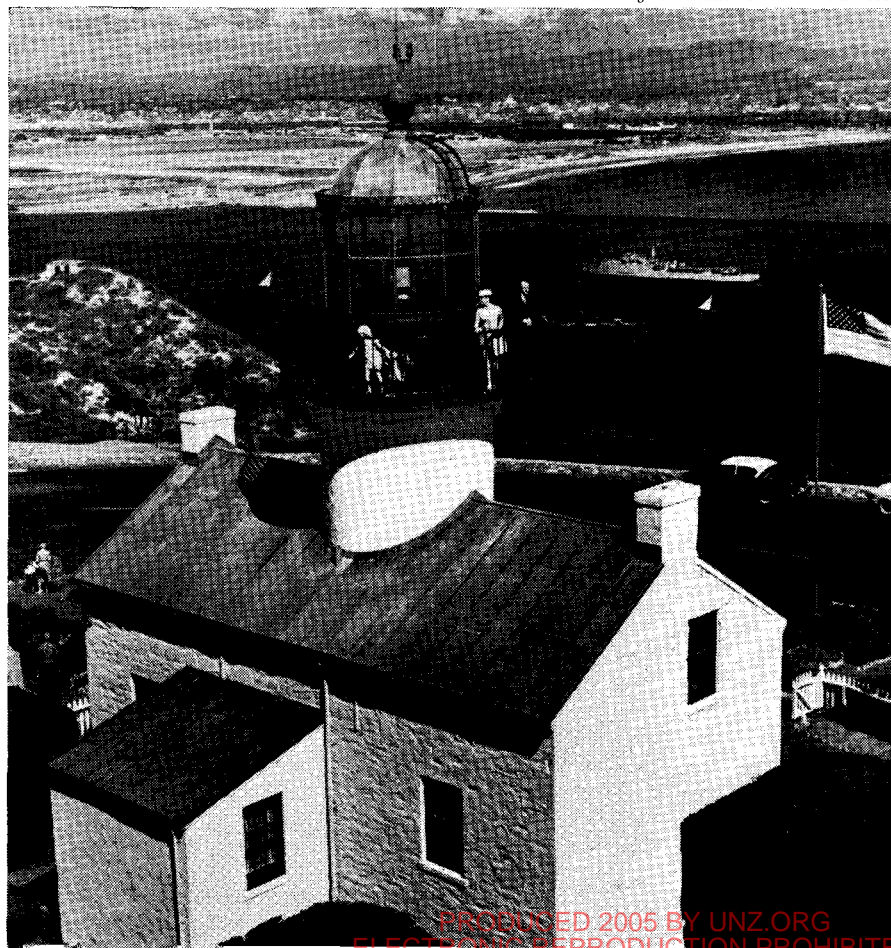
It is painful to think the mission is doomed, because it is a classic inside and out, redolent of its eighteenth-century derivation in spite of a full restoration completed only thirty-eight years ago. With its freshly whitewashed walls, red tile roof, and handsome campanile, the mission looks strangely misplaced in such close proximity to freeway and stadium. Inside, the chapel is cool and still, footsteps resounding like echoes of antiquity on the red flagstone floor. From the dimness of the chapel one steps into a courtyard alive with sunshine and birdsong, aflame with bougainvillea festooning ponderous date palms. It is only when one climbs the bell tower and looks down the hill to the freeway and stadium that the sights and sounds of 1969 return.

If Father Serra was the first white man to settle in California, he was not the first to see it. Fleet Admiral Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese who sailed in the service of Spain after working his way up from crossbowman in the conquest of Mexico, made a landfall at Point Loma in 1542, a few miles out of San Diego. There is a statue of Cabrillo looking out from Point Loma and a small museum describing his find, but the reason most people show up is to watch whales. If that sounds like a euphemism for clandestine necking, it's not. Each winter, the California gray whale plows its way down the coast from the Bering Sea to mating and calving grounds off Baja California, as true as the swallow returning to Capistrano. On a single Sunday in early winter, some 28,000 people have been counted counting whales at Point Loma. There, an official census-taking station operated by the U.S. National Park Service—totting up whales, not people—has recorded as many as eighty-seven in a day.

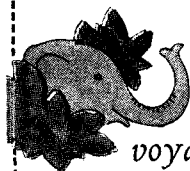
Three commercial whale-chasing boats take tourists to within spouting distance of the 50-foot mammals every day of

## Cabrillo National Monument—"totting up whales."

—San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau.



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## Renseignements

A few things to know before going to Africa:

1. Language. There are over 200 different languages and dialects spoken in Africa. But, if you have a smattering of English or French, you'll have no trouble communicating.
2. Visas. You'll need them in most countries, in addition to your passport. In order to apply for a tourist visa check your travel agent or the consulates of the countries you'll want to visit.
3. Inoculations. Get



smallpox, typhoid, para-typhoid, typhus, cholera and tetanus. It doesn't hurt to have them all.

4. Weather. It's mild and pleasant in almost every region you'll visit, all year round.

5. Photography. Bring a bag of Silicagel for protection against moisture. And pack as much film as you have room for. Color film can be scarce.

## le Wildlife

Africa. The last great animal hangout. Visit Royal Nairobi National Park, where you can see lions, giraffes, hippos and hyenas living as they do in the bush. Shooting is done only with cameras, from inside your car.

Visit Amhoseli National Reserve at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. See rhinoceros with horns a foot long, bull elephants so old even they can't remember their age, zebra, wildebeest, impala and warthogs.

In Kenya, at Treetops, a lodge built

high atop a huge tree, you can sit up all night to watch the animals come to water. It is, perhaps, the only hotel in all the world that overlooks a salt lick.

See one million feathered flamingos on Lake Nakuri. Stop at lovely Lake Albert, an animals' Atlantic City, where elephants swim and play, water buffalo do their thing, and the sky is not cloudy all day.

## le Good Life

The best things in Africa aren't all outdoors. You'll find some of the world's most luxurious and modern hotels. The finest restaurants, serving the finest of every possible cuisine. Comfort is the

rule. And the tourist is king of the jungle in Africa. Mozambique has dancing and cafe life. Johannesburg has a lively night life, legitimate theatre (productions from London's West End) and California style drive-in restaurants. Athens, for nightclubs, cabaret and even the opera.

## Vocabulaire

do you take travelers' checks?: est-ce que vous acceptez des chèques de voyage?  
do you call that a bargain?: vous appelez ça bon marché?  
are there any dangerous animals about?: est-ce qu'il y a des animaux dangereux près d'ici?  
what a big cat: quel gros chat.  
it isn't a cat: ce n'est pas un chat.

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the winter—just to look, not to catch. California grays have been protected by international law since the 1930s when they were all but gaffed into extinction. On reasonably calm days when the wind doesn't bury the gushing plume in the waves, it is easy to pick up the trail. The day I sailed we were barely out of the harbor when a voice roared, "Thar she blows!" and a few hundred yards off the port bow I spotted twin dashes of spray. The chase was on. Our Ahab, Al Pentis, a San Diego high school science teacher, stood on the bridge wielding not a spike but a stopwatch, hoping to gauge the period of submersion so he could direct the skipper to the point where he expected the two grays to surface. Evidently though, Pentis didn't reckon with the wiliness of this pair, which began to dart and dive with the elusiveness of eels. Coming up for air, they'd lurk briefly in the blinding sparkle (or "slick") where the late-afternoon sun glanced off the water.

After an hour of play the whales, perhaps overdue at the maternity ward, fell into a fairly straight course down the California shoreline, and we managed to pull within 50 yards. All the while Pentis was barking at them to spread their huge tail fins—an act known as

fluking. They finally consented, to the delight of our sailing grandstand. Hoarse as he got, Pentis couldn't talk them into breaching—leaping free of the water like salmon going upstream. Drawing near, I could see the yellow barnacles encrusted on their great gray backs, and the boiling, churning whirlpool crashing around their 40-ton hulks.

If you will take my word and that of the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau, an integral part of the San Diego bicentennial experience, besides whale-watching, is a visit to neighboring Tijuana. For ten years or so, Tijuana has been striving to unsully its name, to shake off its reputation as the Sodom of the Southwest, and although it remains a high-priority retreat for kick-seeking sailors, I found it well on the road to respectability. Not *too* far along, mind you. The day that Tijuana wins the Good Housekeeping Seal as the West Coast's cleanest city, it will lose my heart forever. No doubt, too, it will lose the distinction of attracting more Americans than any other foreign city in the world.

Whatever changes Tijuana has undergone, it is not yet a place for the squeamish or niggling, an impression I formed the Saturday morning I walked into the city's Tourist Information Bureau, a little glass hut on Avenida Revolución. A man had come in with his several young daughters and was complaining to Reuben (Blackie) Reyes, the bureau representative, about a parking ticket he'd received his first half-hour in town. He wasn't merely arguing the point, he was yelping like a Pekingese. "What kind of a place is this?" he asked. "I'm going to get out of here before something happens to us."

Reyes allowed the man to yelp himself out, then lit into him like a teacher lecturing a truant pupil, observing that any gringo who didn't expect to get a ticket for over-parking on the main street and who blamed the city, state, and country for the \$1 inconvenience didn't deserve to be in Tijuana. By now the man's expression had turned from Pekingese to hangdog. Slowly his shoulders began to slump. Then the oldest girl, no more than twelve, approached her father, patted his arm, said, "Come on, we'd better go," and guided him from the glass house.

Blackie Reyes was still fuming. "We're here to help," he said in an accent more Texas than Tijuana, "but I've got no sympathy for a guy who goes and blames the whole country for one lousy parking ticket. If he thinks it's bad now, he should have been here ten years ago. There was nobody to help the tourist. If a girl sat down with you in a bar and asked you to buy her a drink and you gave the waiter a twenty—well he'd bring her twenty drinks. If you got ar-

rested, you didn't have a chance. Ask the cop why and he'd say, 'No speak English. See my lieutenant.' Then in 1958 we started up this booth, a hundred of us. Paul Coates, the columnist, called us the 'Hundred Vigilantes.' Now every cop on the main street has a smattering of English so he can direct the tourist."

What the vigilantes accomplished mainly was to change the mode of commerce along Avenida Revolución from womanizing to shopping. Walking up Revolución between 2nd and 9th Streets on a sunny morning, passing the curio stalls and smart duty-free shops selling French perfumes and Italian knits, one is smitten with the fever and excitement that pulses through a Turkish bazaar. Yet Tijuana's mood seems more infectious. There are small bands sitting in arcades off the main sidewalk playing the gay, brassy music that inspired Herb Alpert to fame, photographers taking pictures of tourist children on paint-striped burros, bump and grind records filtering from twenty-four-hour skin parlors, and just when you think everyone on Revolución is very happy, you look down and see an amputee propped on a board, reaching out for money. Then you remember that Tijuana is more than a bazaar; it is home to 300,000 people, some of them so rich that Tijuana has the reputation of having one of the highest per capita incomes in Mexico, but most of them unspeakably poor.

Tijuana may never rival the San Diego Zoo or Sea World as a family tourist destination, but a father should have no qualms about bringing wife and children to town. Indeed, women drive down from San Diego every week to have their hair styled in the countless inexpensive salons off Revolución. Children pack the bleacher seats in the Inco glass factory to watch young artisans twirling blobs of red-hot glass with the flourish of a matador, and, of course, the whole family takes in bull fights, horse racing, and *jai alai* (whose practitioners look about as physically fit as a weekend company softball team).

I suppose there is a recklessness about Tijuana that encourages even the young to casual impropriety. In a shop on Revolución I saw a group of boys clustered around a glass case buying up all the fireworks they could stuff in their pockets. One of the boys said they were from Michigan. "Fireworks are illegal there, aren't they?" I said with mock concern. "I know," said the boy, ready with an out. "I'm going to sell 'em to my friend in Kalamazoo." —D. B.



## WIT TWISTER #100

By ARTHUR SWAN

*The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.*

The learned scholar's voice was gruff.

"You ask what \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ means," he said.

"The question's hard, as hard and rough

"As is this \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ on which we tread.

"Or, as a man first casts his net,

"Then \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ it in despite its weight,

"So is it with this question yet:

"So heavy and so obdurate.

"But Time, that \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ , also reveals,

"So you must \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ your haste absurd,

"Till scholarship someday unseals  
"The meaning of the psalmist's word!"

His pupil said, "Why drone on so,  
"If all you mean is 'I don't know'?"

(Answer on page 67)