



RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO

Volume 22, Number 2

September, 1996



Death Valley Days (1930-1944)

There will be an RHAC Board meeting September 5, 1996 at the King's residence
900 West Quincy Ave. Englewood, Colorado

Your club has a new stock of *new* 1800 ft reels. They are available to members @\$3.50 per reel, plus postage. The 1200 ft reels run \$2.35, also FOB Englewood, Colo. For those interested in replacing their 7" white boxes, they will cost you .32 each, cassettes are .50 for the C-62 and .75 for the C-92 these are without boxes. Soft boxes for the cassettes are .10 each. All items offered by your club are FOB Englewood, Colorado.

We have a new address for Mike Fields, who puts out our talking newsletter for the sight impaired
243 S. 1100 E. Greentown, IN 46936 phone 317-628-3272



RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of *The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a nonprofit organization. Cost of membership is \$25.00 for the first year with \$15.00 for renewal. Each member has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.



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From the
King's
 Roost

We hope that more of you will participate to make this YOUR newsletter. If you do not feel that you want to write that much, just put it on a cassette and send it along for us to put to hard copy. We want to make this a newsletter from one member to another, so we need your stories. We can of course, always go back to informative articles from old magazines, of which many of you commented that you enjoyed them each month.

Do all of you know about the "One Man's Family" club? They will be holding a Family "family reunion" at SPERDVAC'S convention in November. Sunday morning will be devoted to the "One Man's Family" family and hope to have 12 to 15 actors that took part in that great program that lasted so many years. SPERDVAC'S convention will start Friday afternoon Nov. 8 and conclude Sunday the 10th. Anyone interested in the One Mans Family club should contact Mike Sprague, OMFF, PO Box 723, Bothell, WA 98041 (e mail is hrrmikes@aol.com).

We have **great** news for all of the Denver OTR fans. RHAC member John Rayburn, who was recently honored by the Colorado Broadcasters Association for his 50 years in the business, is beginning his second half-century with a new radio program. Starting September 7th, he will air "Reminiscing with John Rayburn" on KEZW, AM 1430, from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM every Saturday. The program will consist of the terrific big band music from the "Golden Age of Radio" along with programs from the past. John plans at least five programs on each broadcast and they will vary from comedy, variety and drama (including mystery's) all from the age when imagination reigned supreme. John has a very extensive collection to choose from and will be helping to preserve the memories of a period when radio was the number one family entertainment. It is his contention that the programming is equally great for those who remember and for those that missed out on the memories.

John will participate in the "One Man's Family" special salute at SPERDVAC, as well as being scheduled to portray Matt Dillon in a Gunsmoke re-creation with Parley Baer at the Cincinnati OTR convention in April of 1997. John puts out a great

newsletter "Thrilling Days of Yesteryear". The newsletter is bi-monthly and a sample will be sent if you send a #10 envelope stamped and self addressed to P O Box 36106, Denver, CO 80236.

RHAC will be honoring John Rayburn at the September 19th meeting at the Church Of The Master at 7:30 PM. Be sure to be there and show John how much we appreciate him.

Betty White, known to many of you for her TV roles on the Mary Tyler Moore and Golden Girls shows, is also a great animal lover and protector. She has served on the board of the Greater Los Angeles Zoo for 23 years and has been a board member of the Morris Animal Foundation for 26 years. She is a strong believer in the bond between people and animals and has been a supporter of the therapeutic riding ranches in the LA area. She will co-host an animal show in magazine format with Merv Griffin. They hope to debut next spring. Betty was in the Denver area in August helping to raise money for the Morris Foundation that does such great work in helping us to keep our animal companions longer.

An OTR FIND

From RHAC Member
James J. Gray

While in Pennsylvania a few weeks ago, I was rummaging through the attic of my parents old farm house and found two pamphlets/books entitled "Death Valley Tales as told by the Old Ranger" Since I am a member of RHAC and relatively new to collecting old time radio stuffs, I felt I had to share this find with someone other than friends and family who think I am nuts. One of the booklets is complete, the other is missing the cover. The other one missing the cover starts off with the following story:

SHE BURNS GREEN

Illustrated by Rico Tomaso

The first "Death Valley Days" yarn ever broadcast-and still the Old Ranger's favorite.

"When they asked me to pick out four yarns from my "Death Valley Days" Collection and write 'em' down, I knowed right off what one of 'em would be - the story of Rosie and Aaron Winters. A story which proves that truth is stranger than fiction.

"Where Aaron came from or why he ever went to Death Valley in the first place, I have no idea. In desert society it ain't considered polite to ask such questions. Nor wise,

either. Men have been to answer 'em with a six shooter. All I know is at the time of this story (the Winter of 1880) Aaron, a grizzled old desert rat of sixty, had been living out there for over twenty years. If you could call it living, Rosie didn't.

Rosie was Aaron Winters' wife. Young enough to be his daughter, and pretty as only a Spanish-American girl can be. Creamy-pale, like a magnolia blossom, with haunting dark eyes and a frail little figure.

The home of the oddly-mated couple was on Ash Meadows, just east of Death Valley. Ash Meadows got its name from some stunted ash-brush that grows there. Otherwise there was nothing but sand and rocks as far as you could see in all directions.

I stopped at the Winters' shack only once, but I'll never forget it. It boasted but a single room with the earth for a floor. On one side it looked like a prospectors shack. An old cook stove, settin' on a projecting rock, prospector's tools leaning against the wall, sacks of horse feed piled in the corner.

The other side of the room was Rosie's boudoir. A deep window ledge, covered with a clean towel served as a dressing table. In the center Rosie had propped a mirror against an old starch box. Bits of old ribbon, once gay but now sadly faded and worn,

hung beside it. On a second starch box stood a row of cosmetics-bottles bearing the labels of Hogan's Magnolia Balm, Felton's Gossamer for the complexion, Florida Water. All of them long since empty, but still cherished by Rosie.

The shelves about the room and the crude mantel over the fireplace all had newspaper covers, painstakingly cut in scalloped patterns. Two rocking chairs wore hand-crocheted tidies on their backs. The pillows on the bed were carefully protected with ruffled pillow shams. Certainly Rosie didn't make these pathetic attempts at interior decorating to impress the neighbors. For the nearest settlement or railroad station was exactly two hundred miles away. And not once in a blue moon did anybody pass through Ash Meadows. The tramp prospector who knocked at their cabin door that night in 1880 had lost his way.

Rosie and Aaron had just sat themselves down to supper.

"A meal fit only for a Paiute," observed Rosie as she laid the dish of mesquite beans before her husband. "Bacon all gone?" inquired Aaron. "Days ago." "How about the flour?" "The barrel is empty," Rosie made a hopeless gesture, "Like my heart," Aarons grizzled face looked

troubled. I hate to hear you talk like that, honey," he said, "I thought maybe by now you felt different about the desert." "I'll never get used to it!" Rosie's voice was tense, "I know it's hard work. Especially for a little thing like you," Rosie shook her head. Aaron admitted. Rosie "I haven't minded the hard work. Or the bad food. It's the awful barrenness I can't bear. Barrenness that starves one's soul. To be shut away from all beauty - the sound of music, the sight of flowers..."

Impulsively she laid a hand on Aaron's knee "Leave the desert, Aaron." she pleaded. "And take me with you." "But Rosie..." "For a score of years now we have been here, Aaron. Breaking our backs and our hearts. ...And for what-- nothing."

"There's treasure in Death Valley," persisted Aaron. "The Gunsight Mine that them 49'ers stumbled across and lost again."

"A mirage," Rosie was scornful "That is Death Valley. It raises your hopes. Lures you on. Only to deceive you. Oh, Aaron, she begged like a child, "can't we go away from here...forever?"

"Where could we go, honey? This shack is all we got in the world."

"You love the desert!" Rosie burst out with sudden passion. "You love it better than you love me! You..."

Aaron's gnarled hand closed over Rosie's clenched little fist "Now, now, honey," he soothed her. "Don't go sayin' things like that. You know that along alongside of you there ain't nothing worth havin'. It's for you I been tappin' around out here all these years, hopin' to strike gold. Stick it out jest a little longer, Rosie, an' some day..."

A sudden knock at the door left Aaron with his sentence unfinished. For an instant he and Rosie stared at each other incredulously, with something almost akin to fear in their eyes. Then Aaron went to the door and opened it.

On the threshold stood a man. His clothes white with Alkali dust, a knapsack over his shoulder. A tramp prospector, known in the desert language as a bundlestiff. He had spied their light and wondered if he might have shelter overnight..

Hospitality is the creed of the desert. Rosie laid an extra plate on the table, added some more water to the weak coffee, and divided the dish of mesquite beans into thirds. After supper the men talked over their pipes. What was doing up north in Nevada where the stranger had come from?

Some excitement over the product called Borax, that was about all.

Borax? Aaron had never heard of it.

"You will some day," declared his guest. "Judging' by the way folks are scrambling' for it."

Borax. Funny name. What's is good for? The stranger explained at length. Aaron snorted

"Ain't nothing invented got so many uses as that! Sounds like just another of them sucker's yarns to me."

Rosie yawned, it was getting late. But the men didn't seem to notice "I've got some samples of the stuff here," said the stranger, and went to his knapsack.

Aaron leaned forward as the samples were produced. If there was a sudden gleam of interest in his eyes, he concealed it. Aaron was a good poker player. "Looks like salt crystals an' alkali rock you see layin' around everywhere," he grunted.

"I wish I could see any of it layin' around loose," laughed the other "My fortune would be made. An' believe me, brother, I'd head for 'Frisco an' the Old Poodle Dog Cafe. an' I'd..."

But Aaron Winters wasn't interested in hearing how the bundlestiff would spend a fortune. He took another squint at the white substance in his hand, Broke off a piece, ran his fingers over, it even touched it with his tongue. "How can you tell when it's

the real stuff?" he asked casually.

"There's a test that never fails. You get certain chemicals an' pour 'em over it, and light 'em. If she burns green, it's Borax."

Rosie yawned again. These men! Would they ever stop talkin'? "Green." The only green she cared about was living green. Trees, grass, flowers.

But Aaron was strangely persistent. "Write down the name of them chemicals, will you, will you brother?" "jest for fun..."

Next Morning, as soon as the bundlestiff had trudged off, Aaron made hasty preparations for the trip to town. Rosie went with him, stood by as he bought the chemicals, and carried the precious bottles herself into Death Valley.

They pitched camp at Furnace Creek. Then went down to the floor of the Valley to gather some of the crusty white deposit that lay there in such quantity.

"To think I've been trampin' over this stuff for years," muttered Aaron... "Kickin' it to one side."

Back in camp they waited . . . for hours, it seemed . . . until it should be dark enough to make the test. Slowly the sun sank. The floor of the valley, gleaming mysteriously like mother of pearl, disappeared into the purple shadow. The

jewel colors of the rocks faded. Only the peaks of the Funeral Mountains blowed, as if it dipped in fire, the sun slipped behind the Panamints - the western sky flamed, then paled. And suddenly it was dark. In the desert there is no twilight.

By the faint glow of a few dying embers in there camp-fire, Aaron and Rosie knelt down and put a saucer of the strange white stuff on a rock between them. "Now for the chemicals.." Aaron's hands trembled as he poured the solution over the samples and reached for a match. In that vast silence the hearts of two people kneeling there on the sand beat suffocatingly.

The match scratched harshly...flickered ..went out. Rosie caught her breath "A bad omen," "Just a puff of wind" muttered Aaron and reached for another match "Better luck next time.

For a brief instant he held the match as if loath to strike it. On it depended their future, their whole happiness. For years they had lived as the Paiutes live on the desert. Suffering hardships, going hungry. Would the match change all that? He was no longer young. And Rosie - she was reaching the breaking point. Could she stand another disappointment?

He hesitated, then, taking a deep breath, he struck the match against a rock. It flared

up. Aaron cupped it in his big hand and held the blaze to the mixture in the saucer. They leaned forward, scarcely daring to breathe, Then..."The flame's catching," whispered Rosie. "Look!" A tiny tongue of flame licked its way along the substance in the saucer. Aaron gave a hoarse shout and leaped to his feet. "She burns green! She burns green! By heaven, it's Borax!" Rosie sank back limply. "Borax! Acres and acres of it!" Aaron's face was working.

"Death Valley's going to yield its treasure at last! Oh Rosie...thank God we stayed!"

We thank James Gray for sharing this treasure with all of us. Be sure to send your thoughts and articles to RHAC PO Box 1908, Englewood, CO 80150.

We have received several comments on last month's newsletter that featured articles from memories of some of our members. This months issue has only this one article. We thought it better to use it complete rather than to advise you to "tune in next month" for the rest of the story.

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Please help in the preservation of old time radio by supporting legitimate organizations who strive to preserve and restore the programs and related information.

John Rayburn is celebrating his
50th year in broadcasting and
we wish to salute him at our

RHAC meeting Sept. 19th 1996 at the Church
Of The Master, 17th Ave at Filbert Court. 7:30
PM.

It is time for our election of club officers.

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