

Suprise Valley Offers Variety of Phenomena

By J. O. McKINNEY
Mail Tribune Correspondent
Early in March of 1951 near Lake City in Modoc county, California, a 30-acre tract of pasture land exploded.

fenced to prevent livestock from being damaged through falling into the springs, or from their runoff. But the explosion changed the entire setup.
When things returned to normalcy, the tract held three

lakes of hot water. Much of the fence had been blown away; some had disappeared in mounds of mud; some just disappeared, never to again be seen.
Water during that nightmare had been blown hundreds of feet into the air. Mud was found 4 1/2 miles away. Windows were broken, and doors blown from their hinges from the force of the explosion; while scientists declared the episode was without geological parallel.

Had Received Name
Yet this region is so unusual that it was named Surprise Valley more than 100 years before the explosion. This land runs to hot water. It has, too, caves where ice lays for centuries on end. They are apparently never defrosted. Yet six miles east of Cedarville, across a lake from the town is a well, called Cedar Springs where water stands at 220 degrees temperature at all times.

One of the unusual things found in this valley is to hear frogs singing beneath bridges under which water from the spring runs during winter. Winter temperatures in this valley regularly stand below zero. Yet under culverts across roads where this water flows, grass remains green, and frogs remain active throughout the coldest weather.

Right Temperature
Another spot near Lake City water temperatures are exactly right for scalding hogs at butchering time.

Surprise Valley is a regularly shaped oval. Its length is about 40 miles long, and from 6 to 10 miles wide. Many streams flow into it. None out. During years of heavy precipitation, it is covered with shallow lakes filled with alkali water. During dry seasons, it is a sandy waste.

During covered times it is usually covered with mirages that wave and dance in winds that distort images of cities, herds of cattle, and even forests of trees. Dust "devils" during periods of dry, windy weather spiral into the sky.

Many Artesian Wells
On the western portion of this valley are many artesian wells. From many, water flows from the top at the rate of many gallons per minute. This has been recorded up to 1,000 gallons each 60 seconds. With more wells being utilized, the pressure has declined until it is seldom that now.

But on the valley's east side, wells are scarce. What are found, the water is so highly mineralized that it is worthless.

But one well is so highly mineralized it may yet prove to be a bonanza. Impregnated with radium, this water is highly curative. But it is also destructive if not properly handled. It corrodes ordinary materials to where special pipes and containers are required to handle.

Hotel Destroyed
A hotel-hospital built over this spring in the late years of the 1930s was destroyed within 10 years. A building erected there about 1959, with knowledge of this action seems to withstand its destruction but from some reason difficulties have been encountered with state inspectors. It is still not in use. Yet its cost is said to be in excess of a quarter million dollars.

Beside holding these mysterious conditions, and "split" personalities the east side is worthless; with the west being a rich farming land with fine homes and big ranches. Indian legends say that the cause for these things is that the Great Spirit, when building the universe, brought loads of his materials with him, then when finishing the job, tossed all unused portions aside. This came in Surprise Valley. This is why the fragments are found there.

Art Schoeni, also formerly of Medford, in calling attention to McDonald's citation, mentioned that McDonald has been doing considerable writing since retirement and had a feature in National Geographic last winter. He has been working for a private foundation interested in Arctic and Antarctic exploration.



HOT SPRING—Radium water with a temperature of 220 degrees forms Cedar Springs six miles east of Cedarville, Calif., in Modoc county.

Opening of School Scheduled Sept. 3 For Rogue River

Rogue River—Rogue River school district registration for high school and elementary students has been scheduled for Aug. 21, 22 and 23, according to John B. Harr, superintendent.

First grade students will enroll Wednesday, August 21, and Thursday, Aug. 22, in the Primary building. They will be required to present birth certificates or other evidence of age showing that they are six years old or will be on or before Nov. 15. Board policy allows no exceptions to this state regulation, the administration emphasized.

First graders also are asked to bring doctor's certificates of health. Children who missed the pre-school roundup conducted by the Parent-Teacher association may obtain blanks from the Jackson county health department at the courthouse and have examinations by their personal physicians.

Registration Hours
Registration hours will be 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Aug. 21; 1 to 5 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. on Aug. 22. On Aug. 23 registration will be limited to 9 a.m. to noon.

All elementary school students who were not attending Rogue River schools at the close of school in the spring are urged to register in the Primary building.

All high school students who do not register at this time in the high school office will be assigned to classes which they selected in pre-registration last spring. Since state law does not permit districts to supply high school textbooks, certain fees will be collected at registration. These fees are not compulsory, but each provides certain privileges which cannot otherwise be granted.

The school opening sched-

ule calls for all teachers to report on Thursday, Aug. 29, at 9 a.m. for an organizational meeting in the school cafeteria. The following day, Friday, Aug. 30, will be a work day for all teachers. Tuesday, Sept. 3, classes will be held all day. Buses will be operating and the school cafeteria will be open.

Former Local Man Receives Gold Star

Capt. Edwin A. McDonald, USN (Ret.), formerly of Medford, recently received the Gold Star in lieu of second award for outstanding service from 1956 to 1962 while serving as Task Group Commander and Deputy Commander, U.S. Naval Support Force, Antarctica.

The report was carried in the August issue of "All Hands," Bureau of Naval Personnel Career publication.

It states that Captain McDonald exercised sound judgment and outstanding knowledge of ship operation in polar regions - "skillfully commanded resupply and exploratory ship task groups of Task Force 43 for the U.S. Navy's Operation Deep Freeze from its inception to the conclusion. In addition, he personally led scientific expeditions into previous unexplored Antarctic waters."

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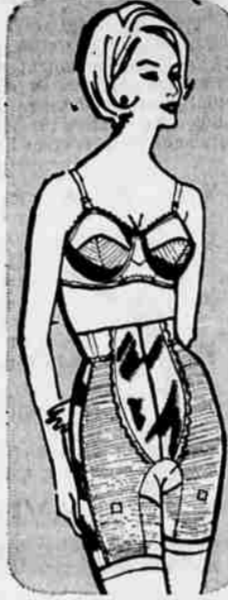
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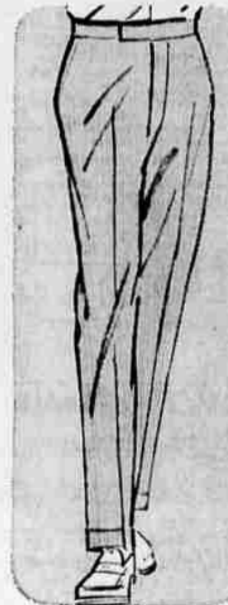
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