

NUGGETS OF NEVADA COLOR

History, Human Interest,
Humor—by Elton Garrett

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A STRANGE PRISON

Way off up a winding, rocky canyon at the upper end of Hemenway wash, in the "suburbs" of Boulder City, there's a prison. And it's the strangest prison in the world.

Three prisoners there pace 'round and 'round, day after day. When they escape from the confines of the walls that hem them in they always return to that spot from which they escaped. That's the strange thing about it.

Persons afar who read of Boulder City and the Hoover dam project do not often hear about the settlement that exists off in this wash. That there might be two-score of families living in tents, tent-houses and even tiny frame houses all along this wash, for a distance of a mile and more, does not occur to the passerby as he drives along the old gravel highway. All he sees is a couple of such residences.

To accompany the newsboy who delivers 48 papers on this route six evenings a week is a revelation.

He is Walter West, and he lives in one of the fathermost homes, on a little mesa a mile from the main road. Leaving the bureau of recla-

mation camp and family colony of McKeeverville with Walter, we go up the road to the turnoff, and then up the winding wash "road." We see several tent homes ahead, on both sides of the road. Looks like they're the last ones.

But soon we round the brow of a jutting hogback and there we see another stretch of the same native gravel road, with another tiny home in view. Fast as they've built homes in Boulder City, there are some families yet who live out here.

On up the wash are more and more. Here, Walter tells us, is a tent that had to be patched after the recent windstorm—was nearly blown away—ripped in many places. The mother had to take refuge in the family sedan with the kiddies during almost an entire day of storm, with household effects piled in the rear end where they would be safe.

Instead of continuing a mental trip up the wash, let us now listen to Walter a little.

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Walter's father is Chris West, tunnel worker, the sturdy lad tells us. The family formerly lived in Yellowstone National park, where

West was employed on construction work.

Now in Yellowstone park there are most verdant growths of forest, and these are inhabited by great populations of creatures, from grizzlies down to chipmonks.

Walter did not go into the business of capturing grizzlies, but he did take prisoner three chipmonks, just before the family moved to Southern Nevada.

The lad succeeded in bringing the frame and wire cage containing the pets when the journey was made to the Hoover dam reservation.

And today those three prisoners pass the time running 'round and 'round in their cage.

"They got out several times," Walter tells us. "Pushed out thru the corner that I keep tacked loose to put in food. But they always came back for food. Then I set traps and caught 'em again. If they got out back home in the woods in the park, they'd never 've come back. But down here I guess they know what's good for 'em, so they come back."

The strange walls that confine the three chipmonks are not the six walls of that little cage. Rather

they are the expanses of barren, rocky canyon and desert, strange to them, which always drive them back to seek the home their young master has prepared for them in this outpost of human habitation—drives them back for morsels of rolled oats which Walter has carried from the store in Boulder City up the winding wash road for them.