

STERBLOOM

This, Our Beloved Valley



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Gloria L. Esterbloom

Fred Higgins.

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Bonita Museum

This, Our
Beloved Valley

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Gloria L. Esterbloom

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Dedication:

To our wonderful friends, and to our families who all love Sweetwater Valley and country life, and especially to the dear, patient friends who helped to make this book possible.

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Title: THIS, OUR BELOVED VALLEY

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Preface

I have written this book to please my friends and family—and myself, also—much because I love and appreciate the things I have written about herein. The contents are non-fiction, semi-biography, historical and reminiscent. It is all centered on country life, here in a beautiful, busy, and much beloved little valley. My hope and wish is that this will be enjoyable reading.

This valley, or Sweetwater Valley, by its proper name, has two small towns included; namely, Bonita and Sunnyside. It is located here in Southern California just ten miles from the heart of historical, beautiful, and modern San Diego, and is just twelve miles from the border of Mexico.

I am a native Californian. Husband John, who is a native of Iowa, came here when he was just a boy, nine years of age. So I call him a "grafted-in" Californian; which means he still has some Eastern traits, such as wearing long-handled underwear all the year around, etc. With the exception of a couple of years, I have lived in San Diego County all my life, so far; living here in the Sweetwater Valley these past thirty-nine years and more. So if I seem extra partial to this part of the country, please don't mind.

When I was in my late teens, I took on nurse's training. This I did with much intentions and hopes of becoming a traveling nurse. However, not too long before I would have received my diploma, I forfeited these youthful plans, to marry a farmer. We settled down to ranch life, right here in this very county where I was born; and I might as well mention here, my husband cares not for travel. So, much of my own personal traveling is done between the wood range I cook on to please my Iowa husband and the woodpile in the back yard; and from stove to table, three times a day and more at times.

No, I am not complaining in the least. I could have become a traveling nurse instead of a rancher's wife if I had chosen, and I have become happy and contented with the years. At times, though, especially when I was much younger, I felt I had got gypped and sputtered some. Mainly this was because John hates traveling anywhere, even to a Grange or Farm Bureau meeting. He says he gets all the traveling he wants on truck and tractor, doing the farmer's work. So that's that. I am still hoping we shall do some traveling some day.

During these thirty-nine years and more that we have lived here in the Valley, we have brought up our six children: two sons and four daughters; and we took in as many others as could fit in our home-talent board-and-batten house without pushing out the boards. When funds get low, as they do on our ranch between crops, I go out nursing here and there. I also baby-sit, and on occasion take the place of mother's helper, etc. I have even milked a neighbor's cow, though John always milks our own cows, unless he is ill, which isn't often; then a son-in-law and I perform the job, usually.

For quite some time before and after we came here, the Valley, and round about here, was composed mainly of chicken, sheep, and cattle ranches, and of dairies and citrus fruit orchards. A large packing plant that handled the citrus fruit for the Valley and for some other nearby orchards, ran full tilt, with the needed crew of box-makers, sorters and packers. However, this plant has been discontinued,

since many of our orchards have been taken out to make room for new homes and other projects. The packing-house still stands; a landmark—The Old Red Barn we call it now.

Different sections of This Old Red Barn are in use continually, for ever so many purposes: to house the Mexican help; sections to be fixed up as booths in connection with our ride-ring during our horse shows; also, here is where our 4 H Farm Fairs are held. Every year, just before school lets out, our own group here in the Valley, with others joining in from nearby towns, put on quite an interesting farm and stock fair. Our Old Red Barn is also an everlasting attraction for the artist's brush.

In spite of a building boom that has been going on for some time here in San Diego County, taking away much of our open spaces of country, many ranches, dairy farms, and orchards are still going strong. Also, thanks to our thoughtful Planning Committees who have been instrumental in zoning, building sites are not less than one-half acre, and in many cases one acre, thus leaving enough ground around for good country living. With these restrictions, we hope to keep our valley rural.

Along with this hope is the hope and wish that this book will help keep in mind and memory some happy days of the past years here. It is also to present some of our simple, everyday country life: where and while its people are of like interests; where there is such close unity of purpose, for the good of the Valley in general; and where there is sincere love and interest for one another, so that if any have disaster here it gets around and is taken care of immediately, helpfully and sympathetically.

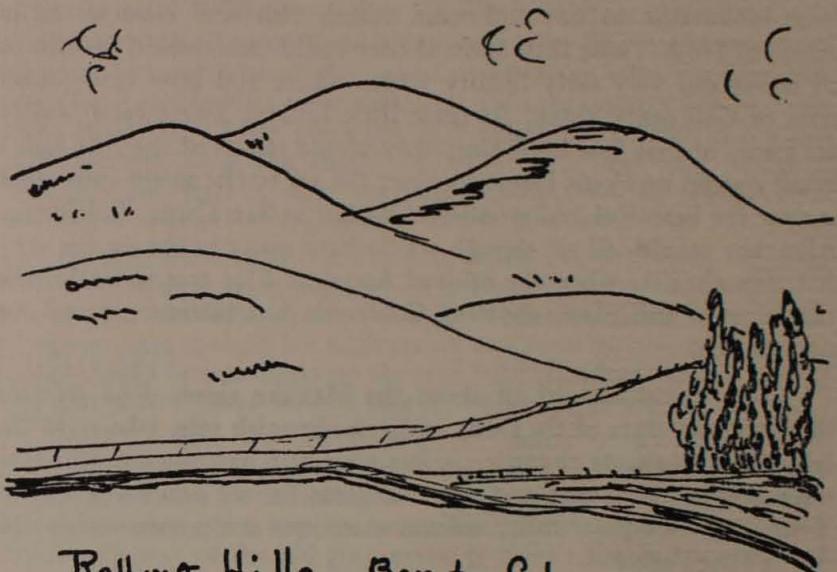
In addition, as they are much a part of us here, I have written a chapter on the little brown men, the Mexicans. They come over the hills to us here from our neighboring country, Mexico, to better their lot in life. They work on ranch, farm, dairy, orchard, etc., and have so often proved a godsend to the ranchers, especially during the harvest seasons.

Now may I extend a hearty welcome to all of you who may read my book and are not one of us here, should you care to come here on a visit, or become one of us by building your home here among these rolling little hills we love so much? And if you are old enough in years, you will remember that good old song, "I Love You, California," written by S. B. Silverwood, in the year 1913, the lyrics

of which describe so well what is in my heart concerning this Golden State, as California is often called—which includes this, our beloved Sweetwater Valley. Remember, also, in this very territory, San Diego County is where our California, with its colorful historical background, actually began with the landing of Don Juan Rodriguez (Cabrillo).

This early discoverer landed on Point Loma, at Ballast Point, where he and his crew of men raised prayerful thanks to God for their safe landing after so hazardous a journey. There later was erected the first lighthouse, directing since that time a safe way into the beautiful and wonderful harbor at San Diego. And there, still later, was raised our glorious flag, the Stars and Stripes, showing that this territory had now become a part of our own U.S.A.,—this, our own dear California.

(END OF PREFACE)



Rolling Hills. Bonita Cal.

THIS, OUR BELOVED VALLEY HISTORY, REMINISCENCE AND TODAY

Chapter I: History

Just ten miles east from downtown San Diego, California, and twelve miles from the border of Mexico, between rolling hills, a range of mountains towards the east, and San Diego Bay on the west, lies the Sweetwater Valley, the beloved Valley of this book.

Today if these little hills could but talk they would tell us many wonderful tales of a very different and much earlier day here when the Indians roamed through and lived here and there in these very little hills that are now our own—a day even before California actually began. Living off the land the Indians traveled long distances

from mountains to bay and ocean during fish and clam season in search of food. These little hills, if they could talk, would inform us all about our very early history when, where and how this golden state of California began. As these little hills of Sweetwater Valley are a part of that first beginning, they would tell us of the first lighthouse put up on Point Loma to direct the sea traffic safely into what is now the beautiful and wonderful harbor at San Diego, California. Also they would tell us, though we do have many books on the subject also, the date when our beloved American Flag was raised for the first time at this place, showing California had become part of our own U.S.A.

We would be told all about the Mexican times. And later of those colorful days of the Dons under the Spanish rule, where, on the large Spanish grants or cattle ranches were held gay and colorful fiestas where gay senoritas and gay caballeros danced and made merry. Then also took place many solemn marriages at the missions in the days of the Padres.

It is hard to believe, though true, that our own modern and growing San Diego and the county which includes our own little Valley as it is today, could have been where all this took place; that from San Miguel Mountain, our land mark of direction here, all of our Valley and other land round about included, on down to the bay, was just one large cattle ranch. This large Spanish grant was by name the Rancho de la Nacion. To this day this name remains on the land here, as description on our deeds of land property.

So with this sort of historical background, is it any wonder we here love, enjoy and covet our open spaces of country? For as from nowhere, or I could say, blowing through on wind or breeze, comes some spirit of an earlier day, wherein we are given in this day a love for open spaces, each other, and the God who created them. And as did that early explorer Don Juan Rodriguez (Cabrillo) and his crew of men after their hazardous journey, on arriving safely at their destination, Ballast Point on Point Loma, knelt and gave thanks to God for His care and protection, so we likewise, each in our own way, give thanks this day to this same ever present God for His watchful and loving care over all that goes on around us here.

Chapter 1, Part 2: Reminiscent:

And again, if these little hills could talk, they could tell us of our own bygone days. A day when many of us who are now old-timers lived at a much slower pace. Just a simple country life on farm, ranch, dairy, etc., when every day was pretty much alike in routine, and when the horse and buggy or saddle was our only means of transportation, that is, until we were blessed with the famous little N C and O railroad with passenger and freight cars.

On this train came out our way many tourists, sight seeing or picnicking. The starting place was San Diego, coming out once a day up through the Valley as far as La Presa near the Sweetwater Lake; remaining long enough for sight seeing and some recreation and picking up freight or passengers on the way back. Incidentally this luxury went out with a flood we had here in the Valley in the year 1916.

By this time we did have a few "autos" as we called cars in those days. And as it was also in those days when your good family doctor delivered your offspring in your home, so it was the doctors who were among the first to have a car. But for the most part we traveled by way of the old gray mare. It wasn't too bad at that as I can remember. We had wonderful good times and packs of fun.

Our good times or fun here in the Valley in those days consisted of community picnics, pot-luck dinners and suppers, indoors and outdoors, dances, box socials, hay rides, Grange and Farm Bureau affairs, beach parties, including grunion hunts, over on the Coronado strand beach near the ocean, fifteen miles or so from here. The entire family was welcome at all of these country entertainments. And oh! the food at these affairs: fried chicken and rabbit, homemade pies, cakes, cookies, doughnuts and pickles; large freezers of homemade ice cream to go with the cookies, cake etc.; wonderful hot chocolate, coffee, tea and tasty punch, wonderful potato salads, and fruits of all kinds that were in season.

I remember well the first of these entertainments I attended. It was soon after I came to live in the Valley. I was fifteen years ~~of~~ age at the time. It was a dance, held in one of the farmer's large hay barns, empty at this time of last year's hay and ready for the new crop. This barn had a wood floor. You would think after jostling bales of hay around in and out there wouldn't be any floor left, to say nothing of a floor fit to dance on. But let me tell you these barn floors were made of good hard wood. I am not sure as to the kind of wood, though I believe it to have been pine.

This I do recall: the barn floor had been swept clean. Soon after the crowd arrived and just before the dancing began, the caller of the squares, Paul Jones, etc., produced a can of powdered wax. This he shook around on the floor and soon afterward we were on it dancing with ease and pleasure, having much fun and equal to any floor I have danced on since that time, it seems to me.

The music we had in those days was usually home talent. Violin, guitar and accordion. If there was a piano or drum on the place this was added. When the dance was held in a large hay barn as this one was, there were bales of hay placed around the sides for seats. At one or more corners, whatever was needed, bales of hay were placed close together across the corners. On the floor behind here were added pillows and blankets to accommodate the sleeping children. Oh yes, parents and young children often attended these dances. I suppose most of our young people of today would hardly approve of this.

The dance began usually at 8 P.M. At midnight you were served refreshments—cake, doughnuts, sandwiches and coffee. This over with, you danced on till four or five A.M. Waltzes, two-step, squares, quadrilles, Virginia reel and Paul Jones were the type of dance in those days. And believe it or not we truly enjoyed ourselves.

After the dance was over came the slow and often long drive home. This too could have been enjoyable I suppose, especially if your boy friend or a jolly crowd were along. But you were pretty sleepy and tired by this time. The horse, good old faithful, seemed to understand the situation (that is, most always), and took you home safe and sound, even though you fell asleep at the reins.

Soon afterward the Valley folk managed enough money for a Community Club House. Then the dances and many socials took place here. It was at one of these socials in our new club house that I met my rancher husband, John. Some time later our wedding party took place there. A wonderful starting out shower of kitchen utensils, linens and dishes was given us a few weeks before. I might as well mention here, we were married in the year 1915, the year of San Diego's wonderful exposition at Balboa Park.

A year later in 1916, which was also the year our first child was born, was the year in which we had a flood here in the Valley. At this time with this flood went our club house, our famous little railroad the N.C. and O. and many other things right on down to the

bay. I have been told our club house sailed down in one piece, though I cannot verify as to the truth of this, as no one rescued it, that was sure.

As I mentioned before this was the year our first child was born. I moved to town for this occasion. We lived at this time at the far east end of the Valley, very near the San Miguel Mountains. I did not forget this time in a hurry. John's job at the time was to keep the lake clean of the brush that grows back so quickly along the lake shores. He had helpers too, of course. It started to rain as usual at this time of year, coming down gentle at first, but steady, day after day, till the ground was so soft that the animals in the pastures bogged down. It was a terrible job to get them up out of the mire and on their feet on to solid ground. Many died before they could be rescued.

It was also difficult to drive our horse and buggy on the now slushy dirt roads to get supplies or to get in to my family doctor for check-ups. I was beginning to wish I lived in town where the roads were paved. Having nurse's training, and expecting my delivery at home, which was the usual procedure in those days, I had everything in readiness. I will admit I was somewhat afraid my doctor would not be able to get here to us when needed.

Every day the dam rose higher and higher. And it kept on raining. Finally John gave in to my fears and moved me in to town. My good nurse who lived in there with her family gave me a room for this extra occasion.

In due time, which was about a month, our first child arrived. John had to almost swim in places on the way in to town to see his daughter for the first time. Water was all around us, even in town. A laundry nearby had a foot of water inside, stopping all attempt of work. On several occasions my nurse went to the nearby grocery store in a row boat. Needless to say, I was beginning to wonder if I had bettered matters any by coming to town. I phoned my doctor often to assure myself he would be able to come when needed. And as the rain continued here in our part of the county, roads and culverts washed out. Water was everywhere, coming down from the mountains full stream.

At last the dams could hold no more. Out came the wall. Several other lakes in our territory had the same disaster.

It was some time before roads and things got straightened out enough to carry on. Fortunately there were only two lives lost here at the time. A couple of workmen, who could not get away from the wall in time, were drowned.

Though our Valley has had several floods and freezes, you would never know it, should you come here today. There are no traces of the damage done.

We now have a new Clubhouse. This one is built on the early California ranch style plan. A Cliff May production, in a grove of beautiful Eucalyptus trees—and incidentally on much higher ground than our first one was.

We here in the Valley are proud of our Clubhouse. We love its membership. We welcome all our visitors. We enjoy all that goes on within its walls, the uses of which are too numerous to explain here.

Chapter 1, Part 3: Today:

Today, March 11, 1954, we women of the Sweetwater Women's Club, also known as the Community Club, celebrated our Club's fortieth birthday anniversary. We celebrate this birthday every year with a slight change of program—a more personal program of fellowship and home talent entertainment, omitting the regular Club minutes or session. In place of the usual pot luck desserts we have on the first Thursday of the month, our regular club day, we have a decorated-for-the-occasion birthday cake and ice cream after our usual pot luck noon meal.

It is a good thing I am writing about this occasion instead of telling the story, as I am so full of good food at this moment it would be hard to talk of anything but food.

We had a wonderful afternoon also. Music and song by a former president and her sweet daughter. Interesting tales of old time Club and Valley events. We also always recall some loving memories of our dear old-timers who have gone to rest, or left our fellowship here. The afternoon was over with only too soon. On up the hill I drive, reaching home just in time to cook John—not me—some supper.

Other country community affairs we have here are the horse shows and 4-H farm fairs sponsored by our 4-H Club of our new barn. These affairs take place at the old red barn. They are quite well attended. The winners receive trophies and

ribbons equal to larger affairs elsewhere. Many of the animals at our 4-H farm fair are taken later to the yearly county affair at Del Mar, winning more prizes and selling live stock besides.

Our own farm, as I mentioned before, is in what we call the river bottom down in the Valley proper. Our home ranch is on a north hill overlooking a large and beautiful part of the Valley. A panorama view I would say.

We built on the hill for more reasons than one. Our lower land has been all under water on two occasions. The year of the flood in 1916 was one of them, though we were not the owners of the land at the time.

However in the year 1927 we had another flood. We owned the ground by that time and had to remove our stock and implements to higher ground. This was the year a bridge here at Bonita washed out. This also was a difficult time. The dairymen once again had difficulty getting their produce to market or their milk delivered in town. All traffic, as far as that goes, had quite a time manipulating. But as before things got straightened out. This time more dams were built to catch the water, making it safe now, and less apt for us ever to have another flood here in the Valley.

At this present day Sweetwater Valley, including its two small towns, Bonita and Sunnyside, is at its best I believe. The progress here since world war two, which has been gradual, has also been beneficial to the Valley here. Though others feel as I do, things here may change. There are prospects of a change already in sight. And though we have zoned to keep out Valley rural and countryfied, it remains to be seen what the future may bring.

We love our way of life, we that belong here, so to speak, having lived here long and watched our Valley grow; we that have brought up our children here, watching them and the children of others of our Valley grow from babyhood to adult, a most wonderful and happy privilege; we that love each other, having one sincere purpose in mind for the good of all the Valley in general. For us in Sweetwater Valley this spells home sweet home. All this is what makes our Valley as I call it, The Beloved Valley.

LITTLE HILLS
(or "Lomacitas" in Mexican)

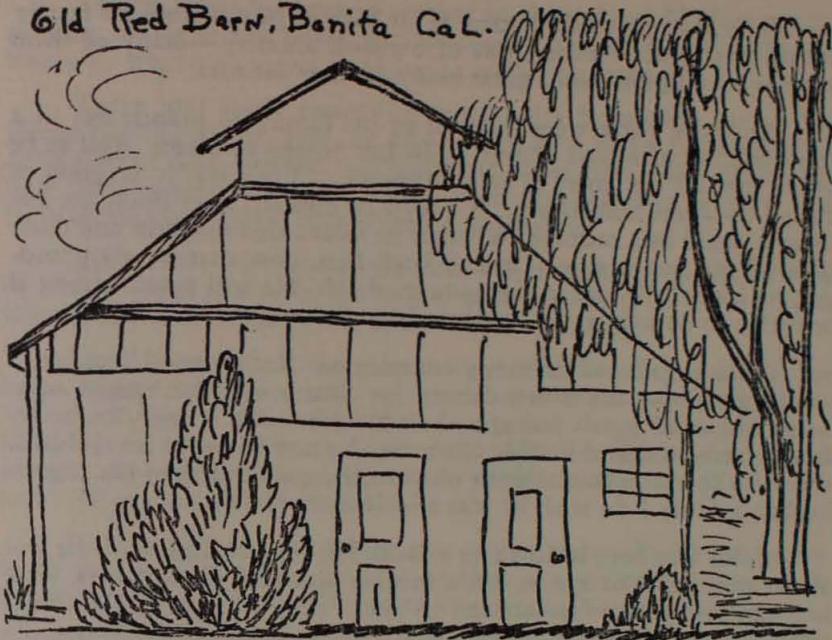
Our little hills forever near,
Rolling little hills we love so dear,
Covered with shrubbery of native kind,
Or planted to suit the farmer's mind.

Tell us your secret rare.
Through progress or change you never care?
Though they plow up your cover of greens and browns,
Disturbing your colorful restful mounds?

We humans would learn from you the way
Of patience and peace for every day.
Just taking what comes of sunshine or rain,
Trusting God's care will forever remain.

You little hills who grace our Valley of open spaces,
You little hills who seclude us here from other places,
You little hills so restful, ever near and dear,
You bring us all together here.

Old Red Barn, Benito Cal.



JOHN THE CHANGELESS

This was, is and always will be John. John the changeless is my husband, of course. I could not have found a man so different in ideas, ways of doing, or opinions, if I had searched the remote parts of the globe. That is with the exception of one or two special things on which we agree wholly and peaceably. Though we did meet in due time, in the right place, apparently under the right circumstances, zodiac signs, or as our minister would say (and I have come to believe so myself) the Lord willed it so.

I guess I will begin on John personally. Then you will see why he is not apt to change.

He is first of all a thorobred, he will tell you proudly. And being a rancher's wife for quite some time, I am well informed as to what the word "thorobred" implies. It means mainly there are no better.

John is of Swedish descent as far back as he can trace his family tree on both sides—a long line of Swedish ancestry—many of them Baptists by religion, and a great many of them farmers.

He and a sister were the first of his family to branch out in a new direction of mixed bloods, so he has no one to blame. And as he would say of his cows or other livestock, "They say it is good to change the breed sometimes". Though he himself, after doing so, believes it could be a mistake. Whether he means this sincerely and completely I am not so sure. Though I tell him, now that we are grandparents it's a little late in the game to decide. He will agree, adding if he had it to do over again, it might be a different story.

John is tall and of sandy complexion. Rather good looking, I would say, especially when dressed for church or other special occasions. He looks much younger than his years. He is friendly, trustworthy, truthful and lovable of course. A good father to his children, and with the exception of some of those changeless ideas of his, a good husband. Only I do wish he was a little more pliable.

John was born in Iowa on a farm. His mother died when he was about nine years of age, so he, a brother and their three sisters, were brought up by grandparents and an aunt. They all came to California after the mother passed away. John's father remained in Minnesota till the children were pretty well grown up. Then he, too, came to California.

The grandparents believed the country the best place for the children, so they bought a ranch out here in the vicinity of the Sweetwater Valley soon after coming here to San Diego, California. This ranch was situated at the foot of San Miguel Mountains. It included acres of land, some in a full bearing peach and other fruit orchard, some hay and grain land, and some in grazing land on to which was soon added cattle.

John and his sisters and brother attended the little red, one room, one teacher for all grades, school at San Miguel Mesa. They walked, rode in horse and wagon, horseback or bicycle.

Though they had play time and fun on the farm they also had jobs to do—herding and milking the cows; helping with the grain and hay harvest, and other crops. John learned the blacksmith trade from his grandfather. This knowledge has enabled him to fix much of his own farm machinery.

And oh, how the women worked in those days! No hot or cold running water in the house. No electricity or gas. And a horse and buggy or wagon to travel in or haul produce to town.

Town was about twenty or more miles from their farm. The job of hauling butter, eggs, or other produce to town fell mostly on John's Aunt Ada. She has told me about those days many times, and how little money they received for fresh eggs, peaches, prunes, nice fresh cream, and butter they churned themselves.

Their home life there on the farm was much the same from week to week. Orderly, simple, Christian, quiet and busy. I guess that is what makes people changeless. It is their early raising.

We, John and I, at this present time, have running water in our home, though our home is by no means an all-modern one. Grandma cooked on a wood range. So I cook on a wood range, having done so all the years I have been married. And right here in an electric and modern country settlement. Even our children who are all married now, either cook on gas or electric.

At first this way of cooking was quite a chore. And I felt pretty much abused. You get so black every time you get near the stove. A wood range is so messy and hard to keep clean. It seems you must always be taking out ashes or soot—that is, if you expect your stove to work right. But I have learned to enjoy a nice, warm kitchen on cold days, especially on cold mornings.

Before we had a bathroom I used to bathe our children in a round tub in front of this same old Majestic that I am cooking on at this present day. I used to heat the children's clothes on the oven door pulled down. Now if my back aches I put a pillow on this door pulled down and sit and warm my back. And for years now John has come in catching me thus and giving me rather disturbing looks and cautioning me at the same time with, "Old lady, some day you are going to break our oven door, and perhaps beyond repair". Our oven door is just as good as it was when we first got it.

The second wood stove we have owned and cooked on for almost forty years now. I think the Majestic company, if there is one still, should give me a new stove just for the very advertisement. What do you think? It still cooks wonderful meals, but of course it could be that in those forty or near years I have learned a few things about cooking. And I do have nice, running hot water all over the place, that is, if I keep pumping in the wood for hours, as we heat our water

by the coil system connected within the fire box of dear old Majestic. However, I have a two-burner electric plate I can cook some on in summer, and on this I can most of our fruit.

I suppose, too, if an electric company should read this book I will be having all kinds of agents coming here to sell me an electric kitchen. But it would do no good, as John is happiest with food cooked on our old Majestic. So old Majestic reigns supreme at our house.

Though our home is wonderfully comfortable and our needs supplied, it is like pulling teeth to get a paint job done in or out, or any changes made. John will say, "Suits me. Where will you get the paint? And who will put it on if you do get it? You know as well as I, I haven't time for such." So I must, by scheming, by hook or crook, get the paint, put it on myself, usually. Once in a while someone will come along, a nephew, niece or so, and give me a hand with some high up places I just can't seem to reach. Though usually the job gets done seldom and with very little help.

Once in a while when John's Aunt Ada, who is still living and visits with us a few months during the summer, comes, we manage to get a few new things done. Last year was a boom year for us. We got John to build a brick porch across the east end of our house overlooking our beautiful Valley. This was done, however, with much persuasion on both his aunt's part and that of my own, and lo! he did give in and change for once. And I am both grateful and happy he did, and I believe he is too. He did a beautiful job of laying the bricks. We helped some and so did a wonderful little wetback Mexican who happened along just at the right time. Now here is where we spend many happy hours, picnicking and having out-door suppers. It is a wonderful place to rest or take sun baths.

Speaking of sun baths, this is the special privilege of our guests as we never indulge in such ourselves, as we are outdoors much of the time, thus getting plenty of sunshine. And John is not too keen about eating outside, although he does it. He says he prefers to eat in the house. While I take my plate or tray out on the porch whenever I get the opportunity.

John is set on his farming and politics. No friend, neighbor or anyone else can advise him as to how to farm, or how to vote. He knows all the answers. And if you converse with him any length of time, you will be the one who has your mind changed, not John.

Here is another change John hates to make, always admonishing me that I will wear them out sooner by washing them—his overalls, work shirt and hat. I have often wondered what our friends or neighbors think when they see those milk, oil and grease soaked clothes he wears on week days. From their condition they could think most anything, even to "Looks like Gloria never gets around to washing John's clothes". I must fight and argue, threaten and steal them out from under the bed during church time on Sunday, if I happen to stay home, or at night while he is asleep.

One day John came in a little early for lunch. His tractor had run out of gas. I had just put out a good-sized wash, and was down to a good suds, just right for those overly dirty clothes he had on. So I said, "John, please change those clothes. I have a good suds all ready for them, and a clean outfit, all clean and mended. You will find it lying on our bed".

Was I ever surprised when he did not put up a fight, but calmly went in to change. He soon came out with the dirty ones in his hand, emptying on the way out all the contraptions that go from one pair of overalls to the other as he makes the usually forced change.

I dumped them all in the washer, and while we ate lunch he told me this tale: Two sweet little girls who live on the ranch where he occasionally works as tractor driver and orchard man came to him this morning and asked him a few questions. These two little girls like John very much, calling him always "Farmer John" and following behind him, often with many questions. I baby-sit with them often, though I hadn't for some time, and they being quite young did not connect me with Farmer John.

Christine, the oldest, just four years or thereabouts, asked him this morning, "Farmer John, don't you have a Mommy?"

"Why, yes" said John, "You know who my Mommy is, she baby-sits for you some times. Mrs. Esterbloom. You remember her, don't you?"

Christine, looking big-eyed and surprised, came next with, "Well, why doesn't she ever wash your clothes? My Mommy washes our clothes."

That did it. John decided if I ever got wind of that it would be just too bad for him. And, too, he did not wish to give two sweet little girls that had all due respect and love for him an idea that he had no clean clothes to wear.

So as I scored one, I got braver. "Now John, please buy yourself a new work hat. That one will catch afire some day with all that grease, gas, oil and sweat mixed in" I cautioned. It was a sight.

"I will pretty soon now" he answered. "But it will only look like this one in a few days. And after all when a man works by the sweat of his brow, like the Bible says he should, it is no disgrace to have a little on his hat."

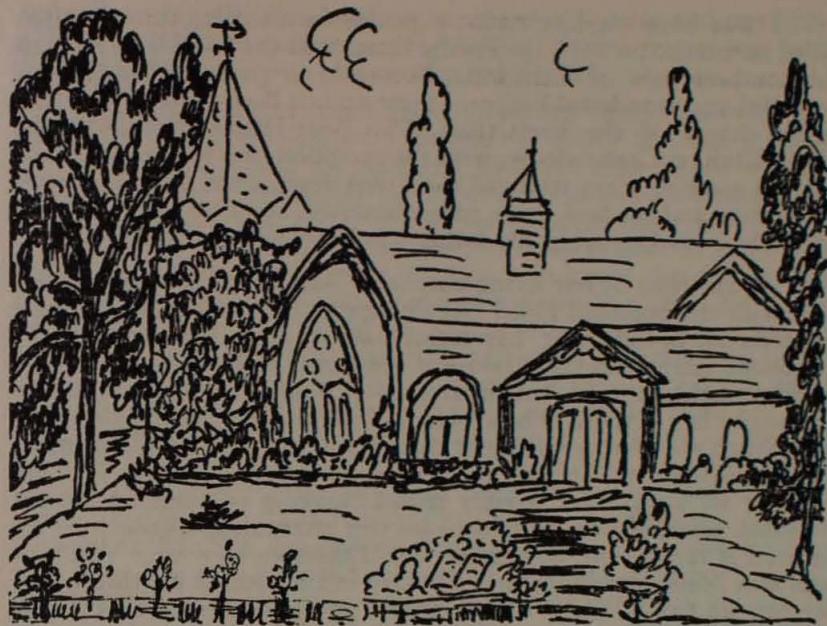
But you should see this same John all decked out in Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. And he is always on time, too. In summer, white shirts. In winter, plaids. And a choice of three suits. Different shoes and socks, and a tie, if you please. All shaved and smelling nice, and looking much younger than he really is.

He plays his violin with grace at the offertory. Or he can play hoe downs and other music also. So we have always had music in our home—our girls on the piano, a son on the guitar, John on the violin, and others singing.

Once in a while I feel sort of left out on some things. For instance, most of our friends take a trip somewhere every year. Or they go with their husbands to the Grange or Farm Bureau meetings. This we never do. John just does not like to go anywhere, except once in a while to visit a neighbor or our children or church. And he will attend some local functions right here in the Valley.

I love camping out. And I do love to take a trip, however simple and inexpensive it would be. John says he gets enough driving around on tractor or truck. So that's that. Then I remind him that God created Eve for a helpmate and companion for Adam, not just a housekeeper, or just to raise Adam's children. John says calmly, "Life is what you make it". So that's the end of that.

So I'm wishing and hoping John will change and get a little more pliable. I believe a change for the better is always good, and especially when it comes to changing his overalls, work shirt and hat. And should it be that I become changeless and set in my ways also, though I am very doubtful that this will ever happen, I'll just blame it on to changeless John, the man I have lived under the same roof with, loved and endured for almost forty years now, and expect to celebrate a fiftieth wedding anniversary within another ten years from now. And from then on for the duration of time.



"You will do," says my rancher husband,
"but you are no thorobred."

To my rancher husband's way of thinking, with my mixed ancestral background of German on my mother's side, English and Castilian Spanish on my father's, I am no thorobred. And had I traced my background further than just my grandparents, no telling how much further from a thorobred I would be. So now that I have married a Swede, adding Swedish to our children's family tree, I, the mongrel, have this to say: We are fast becoming real Americans.

For to my way of thinking, America, being the melting pot of all nations, turns out of said pot a new and perhaps better grade of thorobreds. Also, looking at this from the more serious side, God inspired it to be written in the Bible by Holy men of old that He, God, would make of all nations one blood. America appears to be the very place where this truth is being carried out.

I was born on Coronado; a peninsula actually, though often called an island, between the Pacific Ocean and the San Diego bay, in this southern part of California. Coronado is part of San Diego's beautiful and wonderful harbor. I grew up in a Boat House. My father had charge of the boats there. This Boat House, now called the Yacht Club, at Coronado, is, with the exception of a few minor changes, the same as when we lived there over forty years ago. There are many new and modern boats added however, some for rentals, some privately owned, as when my father was in charge over there.

At the time of our living there this Boat House was in connection with the beautiful Hotel Del Coronado, both owned at the time by John D. Spreckels Sr. My father used to make excursions to the Coronado Islands for the pleasure of the guests of the Hotel, a distance of about eighteen miles straight across, or twenty-three miles from the Coronado Boat House. These islands, I understand, belong to Mexico, though we have had access to them from time to time. On some of these excursions my brother and I were allowed to go along. As I remember we always got terribly seasick, making of ourselves a great nuisance, especially on the homeward trip after eating a great mixture of food at lunch time. My father would threaten us with, "You kids will stay home from now on!" but Dad in time forgot his threat, and we our sea troubles, and off we would go again as soon as we were permitted to do so.

I can remember still the long stairway up over the rocks, half way up to the top of the island. Here at this point was a glassed-in building with benches built around the sides and with tables. Here is where we usually ate lunch. Soon after lunch some of the guests, with us two kids tagging along behind, climbed up the trails or paths to explore the rest of the island. There were wild flowers and wild shrubbery in bloom at times on a part of the island; someone brought and dropped the seed there no doubt. It was all an exciting experience. We loved it. Others of the guests, mostly the men and my father, rowed back to the yacht to fish.

On arriving the yacht was anchored a safe distance from the rocky island. Dad rowed the guests, and us too of course, in turn in a row boat from the yacht to the island. I remember also those wonderful lunches we had that had been made and packed by the Chef of the Coronado Hotel. They always included my father, Capt. Jimmie they called him, and there were always extras for us two in those well filled baskets. Of course some of the guests got seasick as did my brother and I. What was always a glad surprise was, after we landed on

that interesting island our stomachs settled somehow and our appetites returned. So we all ate a good lunch. On the return trip home however, there were many of us who fed the fish as before.

Speaking of my religious background: my family believed in all solid Christian denominations, though not many of them attended any church. As a child, a young girl, and also after I grew up unto this day, I have never settled to believe in just one denomination. When I was growing up I learned and accepted this teaching: that there truly is a God, Someone so mighty, wise, wonderful and loving that we could never understand all there is to know about Him; that he had no beginning and He would have no ending; that He created us and this wonderful world we live in—the Heavens too, are His handiwork; that he keeps such good track of us that the hairs of our heads are numbered; that he will take care of us all always if we let Him, and at times when we are wayward; that we are given our own choice of doing His will, which is always good and right, or disobeying Him by doing wrong; that in the early days of creation man strayed away from God's good and perfect directions and brought sorrow and troubles on the earth. But God provided for this occasion by sending His Son Jesus down from above, to show and teach us how to so live that we could get back in harmony with our Creator; that this Son came to earth a human being like ourselves, though He had a divine nature, obeying His Father's will always. He was born in a manger, and when He was a certain age it was His mission here on earth to explain to us down here that God was not only His Father, but our Father also, and that if we wish to have a good, joyful and happy life we should learn and obey this Heavenly Father's teachings, the most important of which are to love the Lord with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourself.

I learned also that Jesus was crucified and died, paying the price for my redemption; that He rose again, ascending back to His heavenly home to prepare a place for everyone who loved, cared and believed in His teaching, and that after we were through here on this earth we too would be taken up where He and all our loved ones are who have gone on before us. There will be no sorrow, sickness or pain there. All will be happiness and peace. This will be the place we believe in as Heaven. And while we remain here on this earth, His spirit is with us always, so we can tell Him our difficulties and troubles and ask His forgiveness when we have done wrong. We can and should thank Him often, too, for all His wonderful love and care and blessings to us. This we do in quiet prayer or communion with Him in heart and thought.

Now that I have grown older, my faith in these teachings and the things I have learned are much more understood and my faith in them strengthened. This keeps me from worry and at peace, for whatever has, or will, come into my life in the future. True, we all have troubles and sorrows of one kind or another, and some have more than others. This we cannot always fully understand. But we can all have this simple but valuable faith that I have learned early in life, and that has kept me happy, content and busy, and in love with life and my fellow men and women these many years. Inside I am forever young. Outside I have a little trouble at times to keep up with all my young and changeable inspirations. My spirit is always willing, but my flesh is weak.

So far here in the Valley we have only one church, the Friends, Community, by denomination. Some of the Valley folk attend here. The others, who prefer other churches, have only a three mile drive to a nearby town to the church of their choice. As our Valley is growing in population, there will no doubt be other churches here soon.

I believe children who have this early teaching of simple, sacred truths to carry them on through life will have a happier and more contented experience. Learning the important scriptures of the Bible is like going to school. The knowledge of both are tucked away in our heads, and as the need arises the answers will come to us.

When I was a child growing up, our home was not the quiet, orderly type of home that John had. There seemed always, as I remember, extra excitement; over what I cannot recall or explain except that living in a Boat House is much different from living on a ranch far out in the quiet country at the foot of the mountains. We always had fishermen docking at our float, and Dad would ask them upstairs for coffee and a snack of bread and cheese or salomi, or on some occasions a glass of wine. The fishermen were mostly Italian and Portuguese and spoke broken English. They talked loud and laughed much. We kids stayed in the background at these times, just listening and waiting for them to go, so we could come out of hiding. Our mother, who was the very quiet, homey type, and who was sick much of the time, left my father to entertain his own company, not because she did not approve, but rather because she did not belong. The fishermen would always ask how she was, and leave us fresh fish and lobster.

We children learned to swim early in life by the "drop you overboard, sink or swim" method, Dad always standing by just in case.

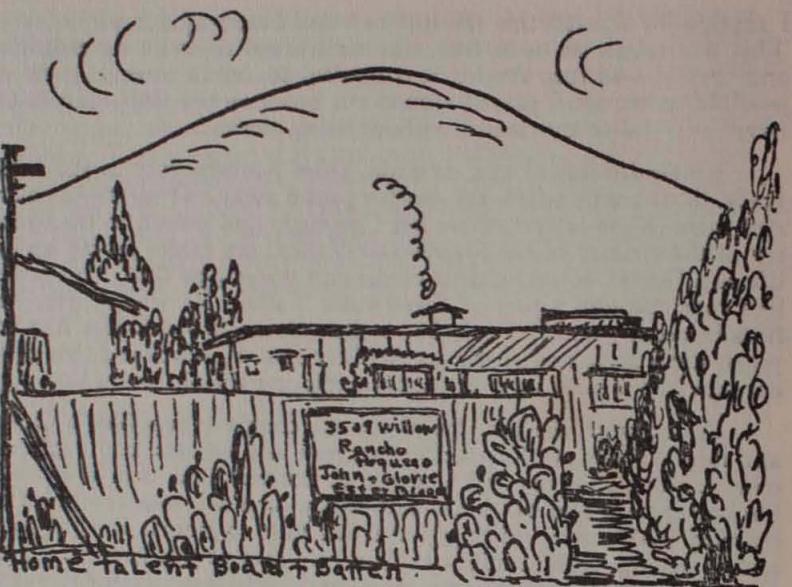
I suppose he figured this the quickest and best way for us to learn. This was tough on us at first, but we learned to swim nevertheless, and then it was fun. And it was needful for us to learn as early as possible, as we often played around the boats on the float, and could have easily fallen overboard without being noticed.

I attended school at Coronado, from Kindergarten to the sixth grade, during which time my mother passed away and my father married again. Soon afterward we left Coronado and moved to the country in the vicinity of the Sweetwater Valley, my father giving up his life as a "salty" to take charge of the city water pipe line. This water line runs through a part of Sweetwater Valley. He walked over the hills inspecting and fixing leaks on the—then—wooden pipe line for years, until he retired at the age of sixty-five. I understand this present pipe line is steel, iron, or cement, replacing the old wood line.

Along with the job, the city water company supplied a house and land. It was not long before we, now dry landers, had a garden, cow, rabbits, chickens and a couple of horses. As it was in what is known as the good old horse-and-buggy days we rode the horse or traveled with horse and buggy over the hills to Bonita for groceries, and to get our mail. I might explain here that to our first family of four children were added two more, and I guess my father thought the country the best place for his now-growing family. So we too became country bumpkins.

A few years before I went into Nurses Training, I came to live with one of Sweetwater Valley's best-known-and-loved families, the D. N. Williams. They still live on and still own one of the larger citrus groves. Mr. Williams was often called the Lemon King. I was very happy living with these dear people, and it was while living here in the Valley with them that I first learned to love the Valley and the people in it.

With the exception of about fourteen years, I have spent most of my life right here. And could my rancher husband John add a few words here he would say, "She knows where her bread is well buttered", mostly, of course, because I met him here I suppose. Well, I do know where my bread is well buttered, though I can assure you my thought on this subject is not the same as John's way of thinking. Though we both agree that we could have found no better place to cast our anchor than in this wonderful little Valley where we met each other and where we have raised our family and have lived and loved for so many years.



ESTERBLOOM HILL

I had a pleasant surprise one morning. It was just about lunch time and I had gone down to the store to pick up a few groceries and the mail. A stranger in a neat little car drove up, came into the store, and asked our storekeeper to direct her to "Esterbloom Hill". Hearing her request and our name mentioned, I was all attention. As our storekeeper beckoned to me I came over to the counter. I said, "I am Mrs. Esterbloom and we do live on a hill, though I have never heard it called by our name before".

To me it was a double surprise, coming from a perfect stranger. We had always called the hill our hill just among ourselves, and still do as far as that goes. And, being the only family living up here for so many years in undisturbed possession, it was just that to us, "our hill".

The woman seemed surprised also, as she extended her hand in friendly fashion and said, "I am so glad to meet you Mrs. Esterbloom. I have heard so much about you and your wonderful family

from the school nurse and our granddaughter, Mary". And just as I had anticipated, (though inwardly I had hoped not, as I was not ready to give up our wonderland just yet), she asked if there was any land up on our hill for sale.

Exchanging hand shakes, I informed her politely that a Mr. Allen owned most of the land up there for sale, with the exception of two or three tracts owned by different families who lived elsewhere and were planning to build here in the future. I was sure Mr. Allen was not ready to offer his land for sale at this time, and I was sure the other owners were not interested in selling either.

It always gave me goose pimples when people came up here asking about lots for sale. The thought would come to me of what could and would happen some day when our precious hill would be cut up in sections, and people we might not know would be building homes all around us. Strange how one feels about these things at first.

The stranger introduced herself as Mrs. Brown, from Chula Vista, one of the towns nearby, explaining further that she was Mary's grandmother. Mary was a sweet girl who came out often to spend week ends with our girls. She had just been out the week end before. Mrs. Brown told me that Mary always came home with such wonderful tales about our place, and how she wished she could move out on Esterbloom Hill, as she called it. She could have a horse, and all the pets she wished. And there were so many interesting things to do out there in the country, Mary had told her mother and grandmother over and over again. She often brought home pretty wild flowers and ferns, too, explaining that there were loads and loads of them out there on the hill; that Mrs. Esterbloom most always took them on picnics; that you did not go in a car, you just walked over to the picnic grounds, and that it seemed far away, though it wasn't really.

Yes, we had gone on a picnic a few days before when Mary was out, and we had gathered chocolate bells, ferns, and wild yellow violets, the ones that smell so much like fresh peaches. In those days we usually went on picnics when the children or we had company, especially on those nice, warm, clear days at certain times of year, or during wild flower or mushroom season. So I asked Mrs. Brown if she minded waiting till I picked up a few groceries and our mail, telling her I would be going straight home; that she could follow me on up the hill and have lunch with us if she wished. She seemed pleased to do so, and soon we were at our back door.

Mrs. Brown took in our place and surroundings in one look, complimenting the while, so I invited her to look around while I prepared us some lunch. John came soon afterwards, and I made him acquainted with Mary's grandmother, and we three had a nice visit while we ate lunch, John giving us some high lights on his farming projects. John told how well his grain was coming along, though we needed more rain to make a good crop; how our pigs were eating their heads off, and no sale for any of them yet; what a wonderful heifer calf his best cow had given him that morning, etc. On and on we visited, exchanging matters of interest. Then John went out on our glassed-in porch for his after-lunch rest, and to listen to the news over the radio, while Mrs. Brown and I did up the dishes, Mrs. Brown herself insisting that we do so, and that I let her help with them.

Strange it seemed to us that neither Mrs. Brown nor Mary's family ever did come out here in the Valley to live, though Mrs. Brown, like Mary, fell in love with the hill, our place and us too. That was evident, as she came out often after that, and when she or Mary's parents came out for Mary after a visit with us, Mary was never ready to go home, always teasing to stay longer. But our girls who exchanged visits with Mary would come home with, "Mother, two days is enough for us. There just isn't anything to do at Mary's house". I would answer, "Oh, you just got homesick", knowing full well that our children did have a wonderful place to grow up in here in the country, with ever so many interesting things to do always.

So we changed our minds about not wanting homes all around us. Instead we urged many families with children, especially, to move out here in the country, where life was much happier and healthier we believed. Others did come to our hill, soon afterwards, though the hill built up slowly at first.

At the time of world war two we were just ten families up here, and for some time thereafter. We tried to persuade the Wrights, Mary's parents, to buy and build out here, mainly on Mary's account, but Mary's mother, who was a nurse, and worked in a local hospital, was just not interested in moving to the country, though she came out here occasionally, admitting our Valley was beautiful and a nice place to live, though she herself did not care for the country.

Mary's father was a Navy man. He came out here once in a while to hunt rabbits and stretch out a bit, as he called it. He would promise his daughter, as soon as he retired, which would not be long,

he said, he would move out here, and Mother could live where she pleased. But we sensed these promises were to please Mary. Needless to say, they proved just that; and Mary, as she grew older, became less interested in moving out, herself.

About that time Mr. Allen offered much of his land up here on the hill for sale. After having roads built, getting water piped in and electricity on the land, it was not long before we had friendly families and beautiful homes all around us here, with names and numbers on house or mail box. And the road that winds up our hill in willowy fashion—the one we traveled on for so many years without a name—is now called Willow Road. And right through our special mushroom ground, and where grew the most beautiful wild flowers and ferns, a roadway now winds through all this wild flower wonderland and is called Balsamina.

Our favorite picnic ground, mainly because it had a shade tree, was at the farthest end of the hill on the west, where we could see the ocean and part of the harbor, often watching the boats come in. We could see Point Loma and Strand Road on the beach to Coronado, and the Coronado Islands so plain on those nice, clear, warm days. Picnic days, we called them. These were special weather days that happened only at certain times of year. At these times our distant view of colorful mountains towards the east, and this glorious distant view on the west, brought all these things so close that it seemed you could just walk over to them. Bringing close, too, those memorable days we spent, some summers, camping over there on the sand. This part of our lost wonderland is now called Eliso Courte, and is now two rows of beautiful homes with friendly people, and with children in most of them.

And last but not least by any means is a winding road down a short little canyon, where the bunch grass grew so plentiful, and wild oats every season. This is where we staked our cows and horses, the horses getting rolling fat, and our two cows giving luscious milk, cream and butter in return. In those days no margarines or nucoa ever landed on our table. Instead was nice fresh butter I churned myself, though we use these butter substitutes often these days. And oh, how the animals enjoyed that first green feed after the rains! They would run ahead of us to the place, stake and chain dragging behind them. This part of Esterbloom hill is now a roadway called Avenetta San Miguel. New homes are going in on both sides here.

For so many years we had peaceful possession of the hill with all these wonderful benefits and beauty, including (which I almost

forgot to mention, along with these wonderful pastimes) the wonderful, undisturbed walks we took when company came out, and on many moonlight evenings, just to watch the moon over the water, and also the most beautiful sunsets as the day slowly came to an end. That large golden ball of sun would settle out of sight behind Point Loma, on some days, while on other days, sinking down slowly at first then it would drop, suddenly as it seemed, out of sight beyond the ocean. And we the Esterblooms, thankful for what was ours in the past, are more than glad to share "our wonderful and beautiful hill" with all the newcomers as they take it over one by one, not realizing what progress can do to a simple, but wonderful and memorable past. Leaving us across the road at the far east end of the hill, behind the bamboo fence we put up years ago for a wind break, with a little, worn sign I painted myself, with our name and "Rancho Pequeno" (meaning "Small Ranch" in Spanish) thereon.

My little old sweet Castilian Spanish Grandmother, who came over here to this country when she was well along in years, and who has now gone to rest; she, who loved our way of life here in the country, suggested the name, which we thought just right for our small ranch. This name, I might add, fits in very well here, as this land of ours and ever so many acres of land within our Valley and farther around, is still called by the name of a large Spanish grant of a very early day, Rancho de la Nacion. This name, that we have on our property deeds for description, is part of California's historical past.

I have painted afresh our sign on the fence, adding our number. For we have that in common with this progress—a number of address. We have no mail box, preferring to get our mail at the store as we have always done. And as our house sits back some from the road we decided this as the best place to display our name and number of address on our fence.

So to dear Miss Scott, our retired school nurse who is still a part of the Valley folk here, I am happy to say, and to many of the old timers and to some of the new; this wonderful, built-up hill with all its glory is still just plain Esterbloom Hill.

And because of the fact that our view on the west has changed and is now blocked by homes and trees we have turned our gathering place of patio towards the east, where are the quiet mountains, hills and undisturbed panorama view of this beautiful, busy and beloved little Valley.

FOR THE MAN GOD CREATED A HELPMATE

From the very beginning of our world, God created the woman a helpmate for the man. This we read in the second chapter of the Bible. And I am quite sure no women are reminded more of this by their husbands than the ranch or farm women.

For in the rancher's mind, as far as I know, you are not only to help with everything, which is all fair and good I will grant, but you are also expected to be jack of all trades single handed, and a mind reader also. You will be called upon to help market the crops—hay, grain, avocados, melons, or whatever else you have to sell. You must be able to fix the broken screens, paint the house in and out, run to town to pay bills, get implement parts and run numerous errands, sometimes right in the middle of a washing. And my washer is not an automatic.

And if you haven't been told of each individual errand, or haven't a list of what to get, you are supposed to be able to read your husband's mind and know what he wants, and don't risk coming home without it.

You should know how to take care of some plumbing troubles also. This last the man of the house will do, when he gets around to it, that is if the trouble is not acute. Then you may call the plumber, of course.

Along with the usual farm home-making, which includes also the canning of fruits and vegetables, sewing and gardening, with millions of interruptions of various kinds, you help out some with the budget (in your spare time). Big joke? You do nursing here and there, baby sit, become mother's helper, even milk a neighbor's cow, feed their animals and care for their garden while they are away on a vacation trip.

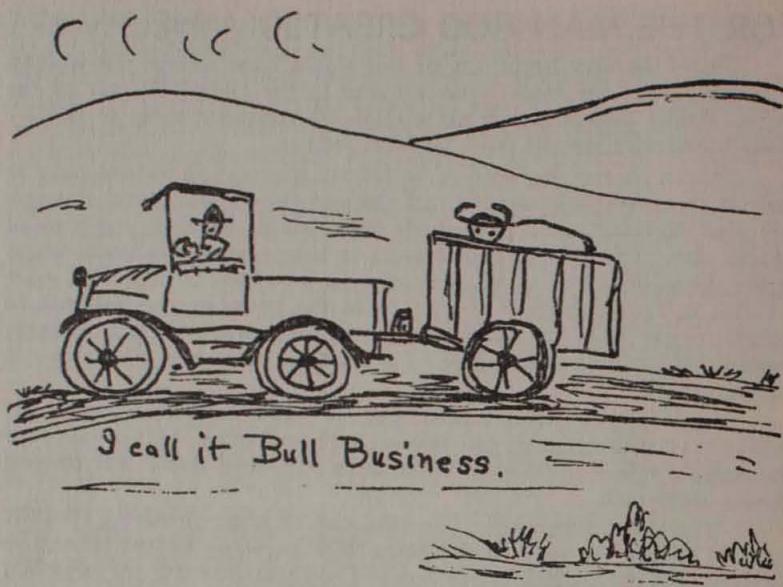
You are a messenger boy for your husband and others also, by answering numerous phone calls, many of them for him, for your children or grandchildren who live near by, and for some neighbors also. So our phone is on the ring and off the hook much too often at times for peace of mind.

My biggest phone call problem however, goes like this: "Hello, is this Esterbloom's place?"

"Yes" I answer.

"Is John around?"

"No, he isn't. He is down below on our farm ground cutting the alfalfa. Could you leave him a message? He will be home around twelve-thirty for lunch."



I give them all the details over the phone in the hope they will know John is busy, and I will not have to give him the message till noon. But so often people do not consider John too busy to attend to their wants. So they go on with, "Could you go down right away and tell him to come to my place. Tell him to come right away. You see John stalled me off last time. And you know my cow, she came in again last night and bawled and raised Cain from then till now. I'm afraid the neighbors will call the police. They have complained already."

Now if I want to be funny and pretend innocent at this kind of phone call request, I could ask, "Your cow came in where? And what is the matter with her? And what can John do about it?" But I understand these round about phone calls of this particular kind when they get me on the phone instead of John. I have learned the score about cows, so I know what he wants in the first place. But why they go into so many details instead of just stating the fact that they want John to bring a bull over is more than I know.

So I just answer politely, "Oh, you wish John to bring the mister over. Alright, I'll go right down and give him your message."

You see, we have what I call a bull business, though I'm sure it has a more refined name. John raises and trains his own animals. At a certain age, after putting a ring in their nose, they are trained to walk up a ramp from the ground floor into a trailer he has for the purpose of these various trips he has to make around the countryside. These mysterious trips of course are made yearly here and there, to keep the cows producing calves, and to keep up and refresh the milk supply.

Our animals are of good stock though we do not take out papers on them. There is too much red tape involved, so John says.

Getting back to the phone call, I ask the man his name, address and phone number, just in case John can or cannot make the trip this time, also the breed of bull he wishes. We usually have two, and sometimes three; Holstein, Jersey and Guernsey. Occasionally we borrow our son-in-law's Herford, or White-face as this type of beef cattle are called.

At first this way of making part of the living on the ranch really got me. But now this is just part of every day ranch life. And if we are special friends of the party requesting our bull service I am liable to be seen sitting by John's side in the truck in front of the bull trailer. I go along for a short visit with a friend. I just get to visit her once a year, on these occasions. How do you like this kind of travel, instead of a real vacation drive or trip. Not many would, I'm sure. But if you were married to changeless John you would do this very thing, perhaps not always from choice, but because John would not take time off just to visit these friends otherwise, or for sheer want of your husband's fellowship other than just at meal time, etc.

All this work as helpmeet should keep my hands and mind busy and out of mischief, so to speak, but it does not keep my mind from wondering why it never seems to get around to my turn for a vacation. And as my thoughts get a little more uncontrolled they run somewhat like this, "What has she got that I haven't? Her husband goes with her on camping trips, or takes her any place she wants to go."

Finally the answer comes to me point blank, much too late. For I have promised a man named John to become his helpmeet, for the duration. And John just has no use for vacation trips.

"Never need one" he says. "Can't afford it if I did". So that's that.

So I have found we women who are of like circumstances must make a hobby of home-making, making all that we must do as enjoyable as possible, and strew along with the job here and there as many new and bright colored ideas as you can find.

And now that I have gotten all this out of my system, may I surprise you by giving you another side of the picture? I can truthfully say I have and do enjoy life to the fullest as I go along.

Though John never cared to go with us, when our children were growing up I took them on camping trips myself occasionally, often adding a neighbor's child or two. We pitched a spraying tent which we borrowed on the strand beach near the ocean. At other times we camped on up farther in the mountains among the pine trees. How we ever got all our equipment, food, blankets, kids and myself all in our Model A Ford sedan car is more than I or you could ever figure out, I'll bet. But we did, and enjoyed every minute of the trip. And happy to say, we never had a casualty.

When the food ran out we came home, naturally, ready to welcome the refreshment of bath and clean clothes, and our own more comfortable beds. And I, somewhat rested, was ready to resume our daily routine once again.

John has his good points though, and is tops in many ways as far as that goes. Perhaps he will change when he himself comes to the place where he actually needs a change and vacation himself.

For my birthday last year he presented me with a red brick porch across the east side of our home. John's Aunt Ada, who was here visiting us at the time, I and a willing little wetback Mexican helped John with the job. John of course engineered and laid out the plan, doing a beautiful job of it.

I should also give some credit to a nephew and brother-in-law who helped put in the outer forms.

Aunt Ada, who is an old timer here, loves to come to our home for a visit and to renew some old time acquaintances, and comes once a year. She left the country, lived in San Diego a while, married and moved to Pasadena. It was this aunt who helped to bring up John and his brother and sisters after the death of their mother in Iowa, all of them coming to California soon afterward.

Ada, in her generous way, helped to pay for the new red brick porch I just spoke of. Here we all enjoy many restful summer evenings, often having our evening meal out here. I love this part of the day best of all. The rush is over. Everyone is usually home by this time, ready for rest and food. Most all of the evening chores are done, and at this time of day there are no flies around to bother.

On many evenings we remain here till eleven o'clock. We switch on the light later when we wish, and light the little wood heater we have here on the porch to ward off the dampness, of which there isn't much this time of year. We also put on a kettle of water to have for coffee or hot drinks with a snack before going in to bed. Often some of our children, relatives, friends or neighbors drop in for an evening visit.

Here on this sheltered side of the house is my favorite spot to write when I am alone. As we live on a hill and have a panoramic view of the largest and most beautiful part of the Valley, it makes it doubly pleasant, interesting and inviting to gather here. We enjoy our beautiful view of the quiet, distant mountains, changeable in colors of soft greys, blues and purples, clearly visible at this time of year. And our good old San Miguel Mountains, which are a landmark of direction here, present a majestic, restful and colorful picture.

Our rolling little hills, most of them golden brown just now, and the different shades of green here and there of native wild shrubbery, trees, orchards, alfalfa fields and permanent pastures, also lend a cool, restful atmosphere on a warm summer evening.

If our visiting is quiet and restful we hear the birds gathering for the night in the nearby Eucalyptus trees, chattering or singing their own sleepy time song, I suppose. We hear a dove somewhere near, cooing in that lonesome though enjoyable homey tone. And later comes on this radio of nature the friendly little night noise of the cricket.

The Valley's general day noises have died down. You may hear a cow bawl occasionally, or you may hear a car now and then on its way up the Valley below. What peace and beauty, all around us. Our reward or exchange for our preferred, though often rushed and hard working life on a ranch.

So I bow my head, become humble in heart, with gratitude and thanksgiving to our Father in Heaven for these blessings of home that are ours while I visit here with others, or remain here alone to write or meditate on the things I love and enjoy.

So why don't you drive out our way some day and pay us a visit, or stop at our shopping center. You will find La Tienda, with soda fountain, serving good food, and which also has a sundry drug store combination where you can purchase almost anything you wish. Or you can have your hair done at our very efficient and friendly little beauty parlor, for we have this to offer you too, as we country gals intend to keep up our looks also.

And if you wish to drive through some special place of beauty you will find Glen Abbey, our memorial park, on the right hand side of Bonita Road on the way out from Chula Vista. Here you will find Glen Abbey much like a beautiful park with a picturesque little chapel. The Little Chapel of the Roses, it is called. You may go in to pray or rest a while or just to look around. Do not forget to add your name to the guest book which you will find on the right as you enter here.

In this dear and wonderful little chapel as many or more weddings take place as funerals. Both are given the best of attention and are an occasion you do not soon forget.

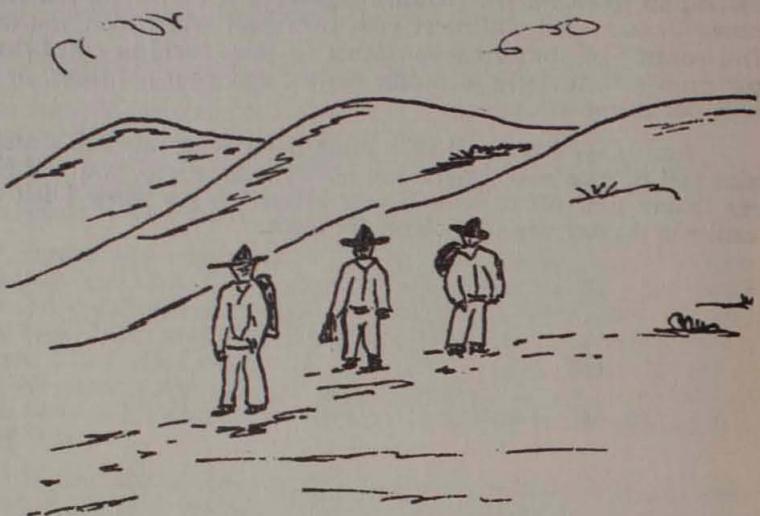
The artists love to come here to Glen Abbey to paint. There are so many places and nooks of beauty to interest them. After which they often end up somewhere further out in Sweetwater Valley for more inspiration, our old red barn being one of them.

I joined a painting class myself, as our children are grown, and I believe it has its rewards, even though I may never become a finished artist. This class is supplied with a teacher, a finished and noted artist himself, and there is no fee for his services rendered. I believe we all need some quieting hobby, especially in these days of rush and confusion. I surely enjoy this one. My greatest difficulty is finding the time to attend the class.

Now if you should come out by way of National City on the Sweetwater road, which you may do of course, as both roads lead you to Bonita, you may be able to catch what we do after a busy day in town paying bills or shopping. Just as we come on up over the hill on our way home, nearing the Valley from the town road, as we call it, there is the smell of lemon orchard, alfalfa hay and all

of these good, wholesome country smells you breathe in once more. A happy feeling of relief comes over you. Most of the strain of driving in town on the crowded highways is over. You can relax now, for soon you will be at your own door where soon you may free yourself of your dress-up clothes (if mine could be called that) put on a pair of slacks or peddle pushers and your old shoes, or go barefoot if you wish.

And if we have mail or I bring home some interesting magazine full of nice, new, bright and homey inspirations, you will find me taking time off to look it over before I begin where I left off earlier in the day when I took off for town.



Wet backs on Parade-

THE LITTLE BROWN MEN, THE MEXICANS

We all know after America was once discovered it soon became the desire of people of other countries to come and settle here. Thus our beloved country, America, became the melting pot of all nations; and had it remained otherwise would still belong to the Indians, and where would you and I be? I'm sure the first explorers, pioneers, and others who came here wished for a new and different way of life. Deep in their souls was a longing for freedom to worship as they chose, freedom to better their lot in life in their own personal way. And, as America took on this new-found freedom, came to us our new way of life; and, though there has been much blood shed in defense of it since that time, our freedom remains and has been handed on down to us.

So have come the Little Brown Men, the Mexicans, to better their lot in life also. And naturally they would come, sooner or later. It was not so long ago California was a part of their own country; and as it became under our way of life, we have much to offer them that their country has not at this present time. Most of us in California — and I'm sure we, here in the Valley — well remember the man-shortage of World War Two, when our own men and boys were sent out to defend the country, and how these humble, brown-skinned fellows came over here gladly and willingly to help in every way they could.

I understand at that particular time most of them came here with the proper negotiations and papers of admittance. The ranchers and others who hired them met them at the border line, transporting them in trucks, returning them the same when their time was up. However, soon afterward many just came over the hills on foot, wet-back fashion we call it here, proving a godsend to the ranchers, who so often need their help. So our hearts and cupboards have been opened to them in exchange for their willing service.

We have a cabin on our place, so when we hire them there is a place for them to stay. In it are two made-up beds, a sink with running water, so they can wash themselves or their clothes, a small wood-stove for warmth; or they can cook if they wish, though they usually eat at our table. We have added magazines and a small radio in the cabin, having found they enjoy the pictures even though they cannot read the magazines. And they enjoy the radio, tuning in on both their own stations and ours. We keep on hand, as they often ask for them if they stay any length of time, safety razor, comb, towel, hand soap and washing powder.

Sometimes we have clothing we can give them, so they can wash what they have on. This they usually do after suppertime, and you will see, the next morning, a line of well-washed clothes. They never ask for an iron; they just smooth the clothes out somehow, looking quite neat after a change. Once in a while they will ask for scissors, and one of them who knows how will give the needed haircuts. We are trying to learn their way and language, and they are trying to learn ours; so we ask their names and always introduce them to anyone in our household. After all, they are God's creation: someone's son, father or husband.

I am now referring to the legals who came here with the proper papers; and this is during the man-shortage of World War Two.

I remember well how the old red barn, our lemon packing house of bygone days, was turned into pleasant, comfortable and sanitary living quarters for the many who were hired on the larger ranches. The rest of us boarded and bedded our own. After working hours they would get together outside of their living quarters, strum on their guitars and sing Mexican songs. We could hear them from our porch, a quarter of a mile away, almost every evening, and looked forward to these evening serenades.

About five or six in the evening, or thereabouts, when they and we came to the grocery store to get mail or groceries, I have counted, myself, as we waited our turn in line, three or four Mexicans to one American. So you see we had many of them here in the Valley at that time. Happy-go-lucky fellows they were, smiling and chatting away, never seeming to be in a hurry. I am sure they enjoyed being here, and I'm just as sure we enjoyed having them, even though we were inconvenienced many times. You should have seen the performance that went on via the sign and point language, as we Americans tried to be helpful from the side lines. The storekeeper and we learned in time what they wanted; then a new batch would come, and this performance would start all over again. We finally got a storekeeper who understood their language.

We have learned much from these happy little fellows. Manana, tomorrow, is a convenient slogan for us, too. It saves many doctor bills and upset tempers by leaving a few things to do manana. The Mexican works steady and well, without that mad rush we think is so important, for to them there is always a manana. And wise they are, or else they would all too soon work themselves out of a job and into bad health or disposition. It is just not their way to hurry.

During the war days when we were on gas rationing, I and some of our neighbors and friends got together, exchanging rides. Once a week or so, we drove into our nearby town of Chula Vista to do extra shopping, pick up cleaning, pay our water and light bills, etc. On our way home we often caught up to a truck, jammed full of these jolly Mexicans coming home from work, a row of them sitting down with feet dangling at the back end of the truck. All would be smiling, singing, waving at us as we passed them by. Or we often lagged behind, just to watch their performance as we drove along.

The war has come and gone, I'm happy to say, and with fervent prayer we never have another. It is wonderful and good to have our

own men back home, and peace times again. But as we still need our brown-skinned neighbors and they need us, they will always be a part of us here. Both the legals with contracts, and the ones who come here under the fence, wetback fashion.

Referring now to the wetbacks, any day a Jose, Rafael, Alfredo or Luis will come knocking at your door. Or perhaps two or three will appear, as from nowhere, it seems, asking for a drink of water, or letting you know they are hungry by shaking their heads and pointing to their empty stomachs. Usually they are looking for work, trabajo, they will call it,—unless they have prospects of work further on, where they had left off when our Immigration Officer had picked them up a few days before. If you need one or all of them, O.K. If not, perhaps your neighbor has weeding, or some other of the many jobs they can do; so they go to them. If not, they simply pass on, with, "Mucha gracias, Senora,"—Many thanks, Mrs.—for the drink of water or handout; then soon out of sight over the hills, to find work elsewhere, unless an Officer in helicopter or car spots them and picks them up beforehand.

I am again referring to the wetbacks, as the law in regard to them has not been changed yet. We have attended ranch help meetings to see what we are permitted to do legally. We find we can hire them, board or bed them, though not harbor or transport them, and an Officer may come at any time and pick them up, and you must have their wages ready for that time. We respect and obey these laws most of the time, as we believe there is need for some restrictions, however much we would often be happy to do otherwise. But we can always be kind to them, offering them food or water or other immediate needs, and I am sure no one here in Sweetwater Valley would ever take advantage of these humble, patient and helpful souls.

We need and hire the so-called wetback occasionally, especially during the harvest season, even though we have to be inconvenienced by their being taken from us at any time. I have a little book I fixed up myself with the much-needed words, so I can ask and answer a few simple questions. John, and a couple of sons-in-law can do much better than I, and one of our sons-in-law speaks their language. So we have little trouble on our place to understand them; and only once can I remember of coming to any grief for having hired them, and that was because of the fact, we found out later, that Jose was led to believe that what we Americans most wanted was speed. And so, instead of the usual slow, steady pace of weeding, he simply hoed

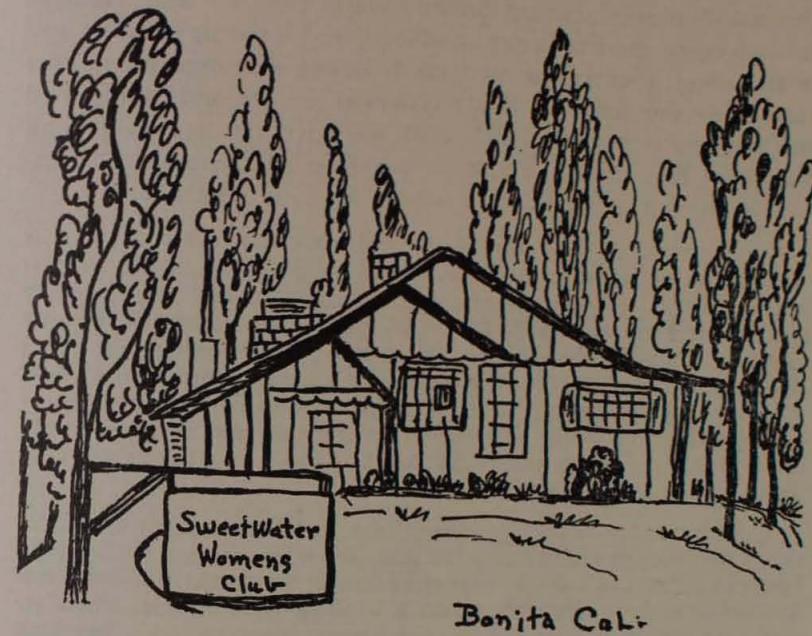
out everything in sight as quickly as possible and had it all raked in neat piles by noon.

Jose had come shortly after we had breakfast. John had gone down to milk, so I gave Jose breakfast and put him to work. At noon, John came up to lunch, and he and I went out to see how Jose was getting along and to call him in for lunch. I was surprised to see he had finished so soon; but when I saw my spinach, squash, multiplier onions, and the young avocado trees I had set out, all hoed up with the weeds, I really blew a fuse. As John was out there to look at the job also, I exploded to him what had happened, at the same time raking over the piles to find my lost garden.

Jose, sensing something was wrong, lost his smile and finally caught on what he had done. With much demonstration he explained to us how sorry he was, and, as I had lunch ready, we all went in to wash up and eat. A son-in-law who speaks their language came over to phone. He and Jose had met before, so Jose explained to him also in words how sorry he was that he did not take more notice of what he was hoeing; thinking, he said, that the main thing we wanted was for him to hurry and cut down the weeds. And while I was out in the yard complaining, John, if you please, a satisfied grin on his face, said the stuff wasn't worth much anyway.

What John had found out was that Jose could really work, and that he was just the man he needed down below on our farm land. So I lost not only my garden but a good weeder for the time being. I had another patch that needed weeding badly, too, but it could wait, for I knew another of these humble and willing little brown neighbors would come along soon again, and I would get the needed job done. He would be happy and content that he had found some work to do, and the cabin would again have someone in it, and strains of Mexican music coming from its direction.

So, on they come, the Little Brown Men, the Mexicans, legal or illegal, to better their lot in life, just as many others have done from other countries for years now. And though we know our country's restrictions are right and best for all concerned, we cannot help but see and feel the Mexicans' need, as they come to our door. So we treat them much as we would anyone else who might come to us needing our help. And they, in their turn, do their best to show us how happy and thankful they are to be here in a country that offers them so much more than their own country does at this particular time.



AND NONE SHALL BE FORGOTTEN

I know this particular chapter may sound to you like a farewell or thank you note. But if you have read the rest of this book you will find this chapter just had to be written. And you may not find this sort of reading material in books, ordinarily. But as I am writing this book mostly to please my dear friends of Sweetwater Valley, including our own dear children, grandchildren and relatives, so it is for those who at times have made me feel like a problem child (and I say this lovingly) because of the extra amount of love and understanding they have bestowed upon me. I could no more leave this chapter out of the book than drive an airplane.

I landed here, a slip of a girl fourteen years of age (though I'm no slip of anything now, weighing as I do one hundred and fifty-five pounds of solid, tanned, brown country flesh.) I who had lived between ocean and bay in my childhood, and loved it, fitted so well in this simple country life on a ranch among a beloved people that there is just one desire left in my system at my age, and having lived here these many years. (No. I shall not give my age away. This would not be woman-like, and we women must keep up the reputation we have of not wanting to tell our age after we are forty.)

However I do have this wish, and hope that some day I may once again live where I can see and hear the good old ocean, its restless but restful, to me, noise of waves splashing in and out, especially at night, as I did as a child. I wish to take gobs of salty air into my lungs once again. Though the Valley has got me—no doubt about that. But it is with me like the old saying of the country girl or boy. "You can take us out of the country, but you can't take the country out of us". Here is my slogan: "You can take me away from the ocean, bay, sand dunes and boats, but you can't take the ocean, sand dunes, bay and boats out of me".

So some day at the age when John and I are much too old for ranch life, should I win out with him, we might have a little studio house or fisherman's shack, near the ocean at a safe distance, with our kitchen or eating table right under a window looking out, where we could see the ocean and feel its cool breezes blow through, bringing back some very happy childhood memories—where I can do, like many of the men I know, who smoke their pipe and dream. Instead I will be sipping some good old powdered Maxwell House coffee that is made so convenient for us now in these days. I hope to do my dreaming thus. And also if I wish I may with some of our grandchildren, John or a friend, or I may have to do this alone, run along the edge of my beloved ocean say at about the water line of four or five inches, splash, dig clams at low tide, beach-comb and dream

And if I cannot make this kind of grade of persuading John, I may resort at last to my old stand-by job of baby sitting. I will care for or sit with some dear children who have such a place. For even though I should be too old to farm, I feel sure the good Lord will keep me in trim for this occasional and wonderful privilege for some time yet.

I am sure there would be many folks needing a baby sitter or nurse that live in such a place near the ocean. So if this last chapter sounds off key, or too much like a farewell or thank you note, please read on. You will find in this chapter much of what you may have forgotten of some of our Valley's old-time beloved, and much of what goes on today in this busy little country place.

In this last but not least chapter I wish to recall lovingly, with thankful appreciation and gratitude, the ever so many thoughtful kindnesses we Esterblooms have received from our host of friends and neighbors of Sweetwater Valley.

Those of you who are still here in our fellowship should know of this gratitude on our part. And the dear ones who have gone to their well-earned rest, I am sure must have known how we felt towards them long before they left. I will not mention names, for they and their kind and thoughtful deeds are much too numerous to mention here.

No, as I said before, this is not a farewell message, though you may, if you wish, take or call it somewhat of a thank you note.

And would it seem strange to you if after laying aside my cherished hopes and plans I find myself content with life just as I am living it, for the present time, that is? Or would you feel that I had missed a great calling, or opportunity of seeing more of this beautiful world? Or that I should have followed my youthful plans of becoming a traveling nurse?

I believe now after you have read my book you will thoroughly agree that I have not missed too much after all; that the Life-giver—the One who guides our destiny if we let Him, (and many times if we do not permit Him to willingly), knows what is best for us after all. As He knows what makes us tick, He must also know what is inside each one of us—what will keep us happiest, content and useful. For we were not created for just our own desires and pleasures, but to help others on that journey of life also.

So here I find myself among a lovable people who tell me over and over how much I have done for and mean to the Valley. I know in my own heart I do not deserve all that is said of me. I could not be so indispensable as some say I am. But if it pleases my loving friends to think of me thus, I can only say I hope to live up to all of this reputation and to let you know I feel just the same about all of you. Let us reminisce for the time being of the many loving and kind deeds of some old times.

There are those who have left behind loving and happy memories. I am sure we all miss their contributions and fellowship. We miss them at Club or at Church, or even in the short, newsy little visits we used to have at the grocery store as we did our marketing or came for our mail. For not many of us here come to the store for just groceries and mail. We expect to have what I shall call a little store visit with the ever so many friends we do not have time to make calls on. And I do often get so enthused in visiting that I forget what I came after, resorting at last to a list I hope I haven't forgotten to bring along in my pocket book.

While I am on the subject of our store I might as well add here that no better folks than the Stadilles have ever been in charge of our grocery store. And I should know, living here, trading and enjoying the services of this store for thirty-five years and over. And I am quite sure most of the Valley folks feel the same about our store-keepers.

This includes also Katherine Stegall, and the nice young gentlemen who help in the store as well.

If you are short of cash the Stadilles will let you charge it, trusting you to pay up your account at least once a year. This has been my experience with them at least.

John hates for me to go on credit for anything, anywhere. But I do get behind in my household allowance, especially if we have an extra amount of company. And we do, most always, and love it. The welcome is always on the mat here at our house. You know how the city relatives and friends love to come to the country. And we always like to have them for dinner or supper, or even breakfast if they wish. So if my funds do not reach at the time, I just charge it.

I am either a poor manager, or John doesn't realize today's prices on food. For I have had the same allowance now for many a year. But rather than extract more funds from my hard working husband, I just charge it. It is so much easier. And, as I said before, I do get it all paid up at least once a year. God bless Don and Rita Stadille and all of their household, a friend to us all as well as our storekeeper.

This next episode I should put in the Believe-It-Or-Not column. Though I can assure you that anything of this nature could and did happen in this beloved little community. I came to the grocery store one morning to get groceries and to pay on my bill. I got

my needed groceries and was up at the counter checking out, expecting also to pay on my account. I cannot remember whether it was Don or Rita who was at the check stand at the time. This I know: I was told with smiles that my bill had been paid up in full.

"Oh" I said, "you're kidding! This just couldn't be. Who paid it?"

I do not know the exact amount I owed at the time, but I do know it was well over twenty dollars. I actually shed tears of joy and gratitude.

"But who in the world did this for me" I asked, and suggested one of my boarders, then John, and went on with first one and then another till I had covered all the ones I could think of who knew my often limited funds and my store habit of charging it. But think and ask as I did, the answer was always "No. It wasn't she. It wasn't he".

I said at last, "Don, it was you. I should have known it all the time". But Don and Rita insisted it was not they that paid it, adding "I wouldn't tell you if I knew myself". Don went on with, "I came in the store this morning and found the envelope with the exact amount of money in it to pay up your account. There was no name other than yours on it, and a note to the effect that this money was to pay up your account in full. So your guess is as good as mine."

I have never to this day been able to find out who did the wonderful and good deed for me. So I wish to say right here, and this comes from my heart, loving and sincerely, with much thankfulness, may the dear Lord reward you and bless you much for your golden deed. And I hope some day I too may do at least one little deed or kindness that no one will know about.

And may I bring in a few more pages on a very dear "pioneer mother". I will call her that gently here, for want of a better name, for she blazed a trail of golden deeds not only in Sweetwater Valley, but everywhere she went as long as she lived. In loving memory our wonderful elementary school has been named after her—The Ella B. Allen School.

When our children were small she used to keep them for me on occasional afternoons while I went to the dentist, etc. She would say, "Gloria, bring your mending along with the children", knowing full well there would be a pile of mending with six children.

When I came back I found my children had a happy time and my mending was all done. This dear friend had some friends come over for the afternoon, and they all pitched in and did my mending.

I remember also how sweet she always was when I nursed for her some years later when she was ill. She would read to me, book after book, instead of me reading to her.

Also she was one you could always get loving and good advice from in case you needed it. I truly enjoyed the fellowship of this dear person. She believed in good education for all, and always looked forward to a good school here in the Valley equal to the needs of our children. This new school has taken the place of our one-room, one-teacher-for-all-grades affair we had in the past.

I will also add here a few lines in memory of my dear friend Frances Parchman. I miss her so, who passed away only a few weeks ago. We were very close friends, as she was as dear to me as a sister, though I had only known her a little over four years.

The first time we met I felt as if I had known her all my life. We had so much in common. In those four years of our acquaintance we went up the coast camping, visited back and forth, joined a painting class, and had many wonderful times together.

Frances has a dear husband and family that she loved much. I know it was hard for her to leave them behind. Her daughter Marian is an art teacher and could have made use herself of all of her mother's painting equipment, but she gave it all to me with these words: "Mother would want you to have them, Gloria".

God bless Marian and all the rest of Frances' loved ones. Though I am no artist I hope I shall find the time to make use of the painting equipment soon now. For I know the spirit of my dear friend shall be close by to encourage me on and to help me to see the beauty in nature more clearly than is all around us here. And it will remind me of the times when we painted together these things of nature that we both loved and enjoyed so much.

I often think of another old-timer. He was well known here in the Valley for his simple goodness, helpfulness and helplessness. I simply went out to our cabin in the back yard one morning where he lived and found him there asleep, for the last time.

"Old Tom" we called him. He came here when he was a young man from Newfoundland. He ran the pumping plant for the Sweet-

water Water Company here for some time, helping his mother who was a widow and ran a boarding house here. He later worked in San Diego at the plumbing trade for years. A sister of his taught school here in the Valley some years ago. His only relative living here in the Valley at this present time is a nephew. He will build a new home soon now, on what is called by some "Esterbloom Hill".

Tom spent the last fifteen years of his life living in the cabins of my sister Doris and myself who both have one on our places. He alternated his living between our two places, as he was an old friend of my father's also.

He built most of the furniture he used in the cabins out of scrap lumber he found around on our places. He also built a complete wood heater out of scrap iron. He could do most anything. He was a great help to us and we enjoyed his simple fellowship.

He did most of his own cooking. Once in a while he would throw out his kettles, disgusted and lonesome at his hermit or bachelor existence, and come in and board with us. He told us of a lost love affair he had when he was young, always adding (for he told the story over many times) that it was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. And we would agree with him that it surely was.

He worked at plumbing in San Diego on the pay roll for years. Later when he came back to the Valley he worked for many folks with and without pay. He was always very careful to keep his plumbing permit up to date.

Some years later, around the age of sixty-five or six, after an auto accident that crippled his right leg, he reluctantly went on the old folk's pension. After that he worked for anyone at everything for free, just to keep busy.

His only fault, as far as we ever knew (and this was known also to the Valley folks here) was that he would pester the girls at La Tienda and the folks at the Bonita store to sell him wine. If they refused, which they did when he had had enough, he would go elsewhere and get more. Then he would sleep under the bridge or trees for a few days.

Once in a while he would get picked up. When he returned he would come to us with, "Never again! I have sure been sick". Having faults of our own we never altogether condemned him. Neither did

we encourage him in this, either. We tried to help him overcome the habit, and helped get him over these times by offering him hot coffee and soup. Though he always said he was off his feed for a few days he said he felt better after he had the soup and coffee. At these times he would say, "Life is a comedy or a tragedy. You can take it any way you wish". He also quoted scripture often. I believe in his heart much of his life was directed by what he learned at a Methodist Church school which he attended as a child. He was conservative and wise at times.

Once in a while he would ask me, "Gloria, what are you going to put on my grave when I pass out?"

I would answer, "Cactus Tom, how's that?" in fun of course, not thinking of the time when I might have to decide.

I bought for him a bouquet of beautiful flowers when this time came, though I have wondered since just what kind of flowers he did like. I am sorry I never asked him. Just one of the "little" things we forget to do sometimes when we are all wrapped up in our own lives.

So far this year we have had a wonderful summer here in the Valley. Just now John and son Sam and son-in-law Mitchell are busy harvesting and selling their watermelons. Our crop has been good this year and our melons are nice and sweet. It looks like we will have plenty of money out of them to pay our taxes, other expenses and the new year's licenses on the trucks and cars. Even though our cars are old they are in use pretty much and will have to have a new license, of course. We will also have to save some money for seed for next year's crop of hay, melons, etc. This ranch life takes a lot of figuring, believe it or not.

School will begin again soon too, now, and this week our grandchildren who live near us did their pre-school shopping. How they always enjoy this. Our own children loved this, too. Then they can hardly wait for school to begin to display their new clothes.

God bless our young folks. They are our joy and care; our own and the other children of the Valley also. And I can assure you that for my baby sitting here and there I am well rewarded with far more than what I receive in cash for my services. I am given pictures of many of these dear children at Christmas time, so I have a nice collection. I cherish and keep them all.

These children are all so much a part of life here in the country. We enjoy watching them grow from babyhood to adult life, a wonderful privilege, and such a pleasure to me. And when I am out here and there I hear ever so many voices and recognize ever so many sweet faces as they call, "Hello!" or, "Hi, Mrs. Esterbloom, when are you coming to our house?"

We have stories together on baby sitting nights, say prayers together, have friendly little talks, and sometimes we have supper together also.

I believe baby sitting to be one of the most honorable and trustful jobs there is. For I am sure most parents, including myself, are particular who they leave in charge of their darlings. I give them all my best. I tell both children and parents that I am there because Mother and Daddy wish to be gone a while, so I am there in their place. I carry out all and every wish of the parents. I expect the children to cooperate. I have never had a situation I could not handle. The children are all sweet and good. There is a fire burning on the hearth or a heater of some kind going on cold days so I keep warm and comfortable. There are books to read and look at, though very often I bring some crocheting along. On the couch is a blanket and pillow so I may lie down and rest if the folks expect to be late. Also I am often invited to have coffee or tea and a snack, though I very seldom indulge in this as eating at midnight does not agree with me I find.

There are five or six baby sitters in the Valley, and we are kept pretty busy at times.

Today as I look around our yard I am wondering how we will get our weeding done. John never has time, and I just do not feel up to this job any more. The willing and humble little wetback Mexican who could and would gladly do the job is a scarce article these days. There are some new and stricter laws on them just now I am told, so this must be keeping them away.

I wonder too, what we shall do when hay harvest time comes around again. We ranchers who depend on this kind of help sure do miss them. And I not only miss their willing help, I miss their smiling faces, quiet manners and humble spirit. I miss them coming to my door for a handout, or in search of work ("trabajo" they call it). I just don't see how we are going to do without them, as I mentioned before, during the hay harvest season. So I hope "manana" ("tomorrow" in our language) will bring these helpful and willing

workers back to us. Ever so many of us farmers who are not able to hire the legal steady, as we do not have enough steady work or money to do so, prefer and need the so-called wetbacks.

And as none shall be forgotten I wish to add here another very dear and wonderful family. It was soon after I came to the country to live that I made my home with these dear people, just a few years before I went into nurse's training. It was a happy and blessed experience, and I learned much of the things that helped me later in my busy life as a rancher's wife.

This dear family has also blazed a trail of golden deeds. I wonder if many of the Valley folks ever knew about this one. When we had a freeze here in the Valley their orchard was badly damaged. Instead of laying off the men these thoughtful people knew these men needed their jobs to support their families. So they borrowed money, putting themselves in debt for the time being, just to keep these men on the job.

This is the spirit of many here in the Valley. And how we do miss them when they have gone to rest or are not still with us. But as their younger generations carry on where they left off you know and you are happy to find that life is eternal.

However there is one sad situation here in the Valley just now. I am sorry we have not been able to do much to change matters before this. But after this afternoon's experience I'm convinced we should do something to remedy this sad situation, and quick.

I drove down our hill to our first boulevard stop; all went well; on to the next and on to our shopping center intersection. It was about four-thirty or thereabouts in the afternoon. Car after car came from the Chula Vista direction on Bonita road, full speed ahead, seeming to have been shot all out of the same gun, not slowing down for anybody or anything.

I was sure indignant to watch our Valley children who ride their horses at this time of evening, waiting in fear for a time to cross safely. There is no stop sign here, coming in the Valley the Chula Vista way. And the slow-down sign says thirty-five miles per hour. It should read fifteen, and we should insist on a stop sign here. These thoughtless people who drive through here, with no thought other than to use our Valley for a thoroughfare to get to their various homes farther on, should by all means have a stop sign reminder. After all this is the only fair and safe thing to do here.

These children have been advised to ride in early morning or later afternoon, instead of in the heat of the day, and they are good about sticking to the trails. As the trail does and must cross over the highway in places, this is one of them. And it would be only fair to stop here and let the children go across. It is hard to control a horse when the cars keep coming on, especially at a great rate of speed. I'm sure these same people who drive through the Valley, naturally wanting to get home as soon as possible, and we don't blame them for that, would want their own children to be safe. So a stop sign would help both ways.

And if the slow down sign read fifteen miles per hour instead of thirty-five, they might at least slow down to thirty-five instead of the sixty or over they drive at present through this little town or shopping center at Bonita.

And there should be a stop sign also at the foot of Willow Road, sometimes called Esterbloom Hill. Coming from the east on Sweetwater Road at the present time this dangerous place is called by many of us on the hill, a death trap. As we are the ones who suffer most here we should have this important and necessary stop sign.

If not before, I do sincerely hope when our Club meets again on the second Thursday of this month, which is very soon now, we will take up this sad situation, do something about it, and get somewhere this time. My greatest hope and prayer is that no one gets killed in the meantime.

As it is mostly what goes on in one's mind that gives us contentment, peace or trouble, I cannot bear to think of a time when Sweetwater Valley would be drained of these people who have and still do make up what I call the beloved Valley I have just written about. Will we also become a part of the great rush and noise of a growing city, or is it possible that we can remain as we are?

Nevertheless we as individuals play a great part in what goes on around us. And we shall do as we always have done here—share our roads with the rest of the world, and I hope the day will come when we all drive at a safer pace through these country places, and even if there are no stop signs, will slow up for the child on the horse, as well as the pedestrian, and let them cross the road or pass on safely. After all these children should be privileged to cross in safety at their own shopping center and La Tienda for cold drinks or ice cream sodas, etc. or just to follow the riding path here and cross over to their homes without being killed.

And if all people alike really wish to have peace and safety throughout the world, we will all have regard what we do towards others.

Perhaps after reading thus far some of you dear friends, and especially some of you old-timers of Sweetwater Valley, may find that I have left out some data that is very important to you, or that there is some special land mark not mentioned. I'm sorry, as I have not wished to leave out anything that would be of interest, and I am sure there are ever so many happy, important and old-time memories, before my day here.

These last however, I had intended to mention before, so I will add them here. One is the quite old and interesting country home built for a son of America's 18th President, U.S.S. Grant. This place still stands, a lovely and memorable landmark of the Valley's past and present.

The main house was built in the very early 1900's. At about this same time this son built also the Grant Hotel at San Diego. The Farringtons, the new owners of the lovely old country place, have named this estate Farrington Farm. The original name was the Grant Ranch.

The Farringtons, appreciating the beauty and goodly construction of the buildings, have added a new paint job along with other new improvements, and will add more improvements in the future, but are retaining much of the same beauty as of old.

You will find this landmark on the left of Sweetwater Road as you climb the hill going out at the far north of the Valley. This lovely place looks out over many of our little hills and much of our open spaces still uninhabited here, and also much of the built-up Valley in general.

I had intended also to mention this in regard to our Clubhouse doings of interest. One year, quite some time ago, we had a cook book made up and printed in book form, of the favorite or special recipes of our Club members, along with some very good household hints. On the cover was the sketched picture of our Cliff May designed Clubhouse, with our sign "Sweetwater Women's Club" by M. G. Volkmann. Most all of us old-timers have one, and it is well used and cherished by us all as the recipes of our beloved friends, some of whom have left our fellowship here to move to other places, so we

may have them with us again, and others who have gone over that well-known path we all shall take at some time or other. It is a pleasure to have their recipes still here for us to use, with their names attached in memory of the times we spent together years before enjoying those same delicious dishes or breads, made by these dear ones at our pot luck luncheons on Club days.

And as I do not wish to leave out anything that should be of interest, someone mentioned World War II. I have written, as you know, about our little brown helpers, the Mexicans, during those man shortage days. However, I did neglect to mention this fact: On a part of one of our larger ranches an Army camp was stationed. We also had an Army look-out station on a hill in back and above the school, with the usual search lights going around. All this of course was unusual maneuvers for us out here in the country.

We also turned our Clubhouse into a Red Cross work room and a U.S.O. for our service men, all donating service and goodies in turn, and helping where and whenever we could.

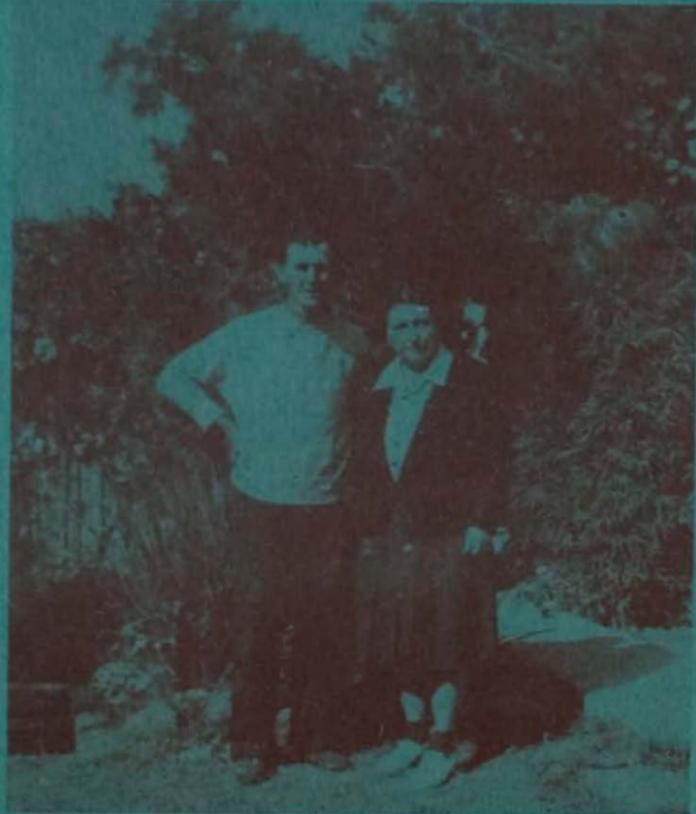
And above all else I know we here in the Valley shall never forget this, the very big thing—our boys, five of them, our Valley's very best youth, who gave their lives for our country's cause. They are Richard W. Burch, William Beckett, Robert L. Goodell, John Pappas and Jack R. Eaton. We shall always keep tucked away in our hearts the memory of their great sacrifice.

And, as none shall be forgotten, and our Valley is growing fast in population now, I wish to add this here in benefit of our newcomers who are a part of us here now also. Tonight as I look over and around our much lighted up Valley, one must admit and cannot help but feel this new and decided change here. We are no more the secluded little Valley or country place that we were in bygone days, though I am happy to add we are still countrified. And on becoming acquainted with our newcomers, almost every day in one place or another, in the Church, Club or at the store or as a neighbor, the newcomer will inform you why they came to live here—that it was their love of the country, away from city noises. And many of our newcomers fit right in with the spirit of things we have together here in general.

So as I say, we shall accept lovingly, with a warm welcome to them all, their added lovely new homes, with their friendly lights shining through to us old-timers from those who are within them.

To me these lights are truly a friendly sight as I look over and around at lamp light time, at the ever so many that have been added here and there. It strengthens my hope in God and in our country's future. Surely God's love, and good citizenship is represented in all our homes here, both the old-timers and the newcomers. And I feel sure our God will never allow anything to destroy our true way of life, the real Home, the foundation of our nation.

THE END



The Sweetwater Valley could scarcely be called peaceful—at least not for many years. Yet it is not a part of the shoving, hustling world of San Diego—just 10 miles away. It clings to a fragment of the easier, “manana” life of more relaxed Mexico, only 10 miles to the south.

Thus, Gloria Esterbloom herself, who has written her reminiscences of 39 years of life in her “beloved valley.” She is a pleasing, split literary personality, her delightful tale unfolding in a combination of the “vanishing race” of “yesterday,” when Father paid cash (her husband still likes it that way), and the installment-buying, lush modern years.

‘Readers will find it a unique contribution to that short shelf of true, unlabored Americana—a sort of autobiography, a rich helping from a life such as many of us have in our family’s background, but which few have time or talent to set down for the enjoyment of their friends and the reading public.