

This Week's Guest Writer
April 26, 1951

Mrs. Elizabeth Kuphaldt lives in the Japatul Valley on a lovely ranch, a few miles from Alpine. With her family she arrived in 1945 from San Diego, where she spent a short time after leaving San Francisco. She is an artist; and is active in the Alpine Artist's and Writer's.

MOUNTAIN MAGIC

After living in and around several busy cities for the first half of my life, I'll take San Diego's back country for complete and joyful existence. There is such a warm kindness in these sunbathed mountains whose silent companionship draws us closer the longer they shelter us.

I enjoy nothing better than to be out on a horse following a trail in and out of quiet canyons steeped in the fragrance of the yerbas and sage. Now and then the drone of a plane reminds me that I am still on earth because the only other sounds come from a great variety of birds and other small creatures of the mountains. There is a soothing quality in the dry beat that radiates from the rocks as I ride along. It is all so far away from the elements that cause unrest; an atmosphere that makes us think good thoughts and long to share the secret of this contentment with the millions of persons who must live in fear and oppression.

Thirty or forty years ago it really meant something to travel from San Diego to the Alpine area, usually a two day adventure. A delightful lady, who has great fun recounting happenings of the earlier days around here, has told me many of her experiences. She and her husband owned part of the ranch which is now ours. They ran a small dairy and as there was no help and the children were still babies, it was her job to haul the big cans of cream down into Dehesa Valley where the stage picked them up and delivered them in San Diego. She would leave early in the morning in the buckboard and if all went well, she would be home that night before dark. On many a return trip she had to light the kerosene lantern and hang it on the wagon.

They had rains, too, in those days! Once, upon leaving, her husband, Charlie, assured her that if she would let Prince have his head and not try to guide him when fording the Sweet-water river where the Sacatera Bridge now spans it, he would make the crossing safely. On a previous trip, the water came so high that the floundering horse nearly lost his footing and the buckboard swayed crazily. These were days when living this far out meant all sorts of sacrifices and discomforts; yet these people loved it.

Now, we think nothing at all of running out the wash, tidying the house, making two or three pounds of butter, cleaning up the car, and checking on the livestock. After which we shower, take down the pin curls, dress, pat the several assorted dogs goodbye, and start out for town to keep a luncheon appointment.

Always to me the best part of these trips is the coming home, when the last of the sun shows coral on the soft purple contours of our mountains. Give man credit for mammoth achievements in building the highways, the bridges and automobiles which make it possible for us to live in this paradise; and give God credit for this beauty He alone can create.

Mrs. Elizabeth Kuphaldt