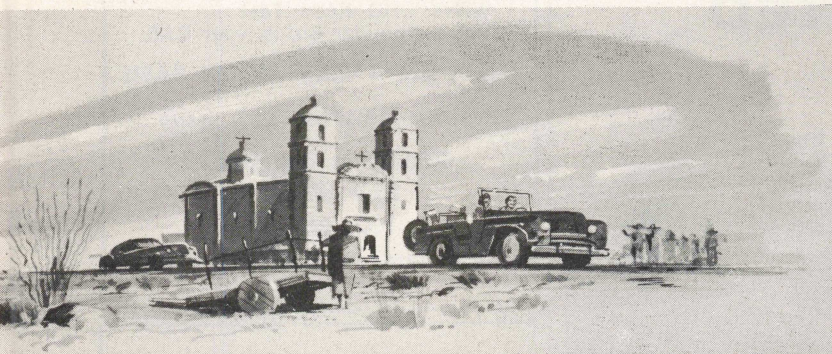


Baja California, Mexico, is a desolate peninsula extending south from the California-Mexico border. The territory is about 800 miles long and varies from 30 to 150 miles in width.

It is sparsely settled country and in a 600 mile stretch in the center of the peninsula there are virtually no inhabitants. The climate in the north is similar to southern California, in the center an arid desert while the southern tip is almost tropical.

For the most part, much of Baja remains a mystery to most Americans. True, travelers in passenger cars have "invaded" the north and changed much of the way of life. The deep south is also well known to those who can afford to travel by plane or boat.



# BAJA

## CALIFORNIA

But a huge area, almost 50,000 square miles, still lies unexplored and unmapped for all practical purposes.

This is the part of Baja that interests the back-country enthusiast. It is remote and isolated—and roads are bad—or unheard of. The vegetation is fascinating with the weird boojum and elephant trees heading the list. There are more than a score of missions—some have not been photographed nor officially visited since they were abandoned two hundred years ago.



In other areas the explorer will run across miners still operating as they did when the Spaniards first discovered gold. Other explorers have discovered fossils, minerals, and evidence of early pioneers.

For the rockhound, shell collector or desert enthusiast it is a paradise of collecting. In fact, some areas still give up their treasures in quality and quantities that have not been heard of in the West since 1900.

This section of the FOUR WHEELER is devoted to the exploration of this fascinating peninsula south of the United States. We feel that this is one of the most extraordinary areas left for four wheeling, and one that will interest all back-country enthusiasts.

A word of caution, however. Baja is truly a desolate and unexplored place. For those planning a trip it is wise to take all your gear, from water to toilet paper. And when exploring the really remote country be sure to go in groups—or at least leave word with friends where you expect to be and when you intend returning.





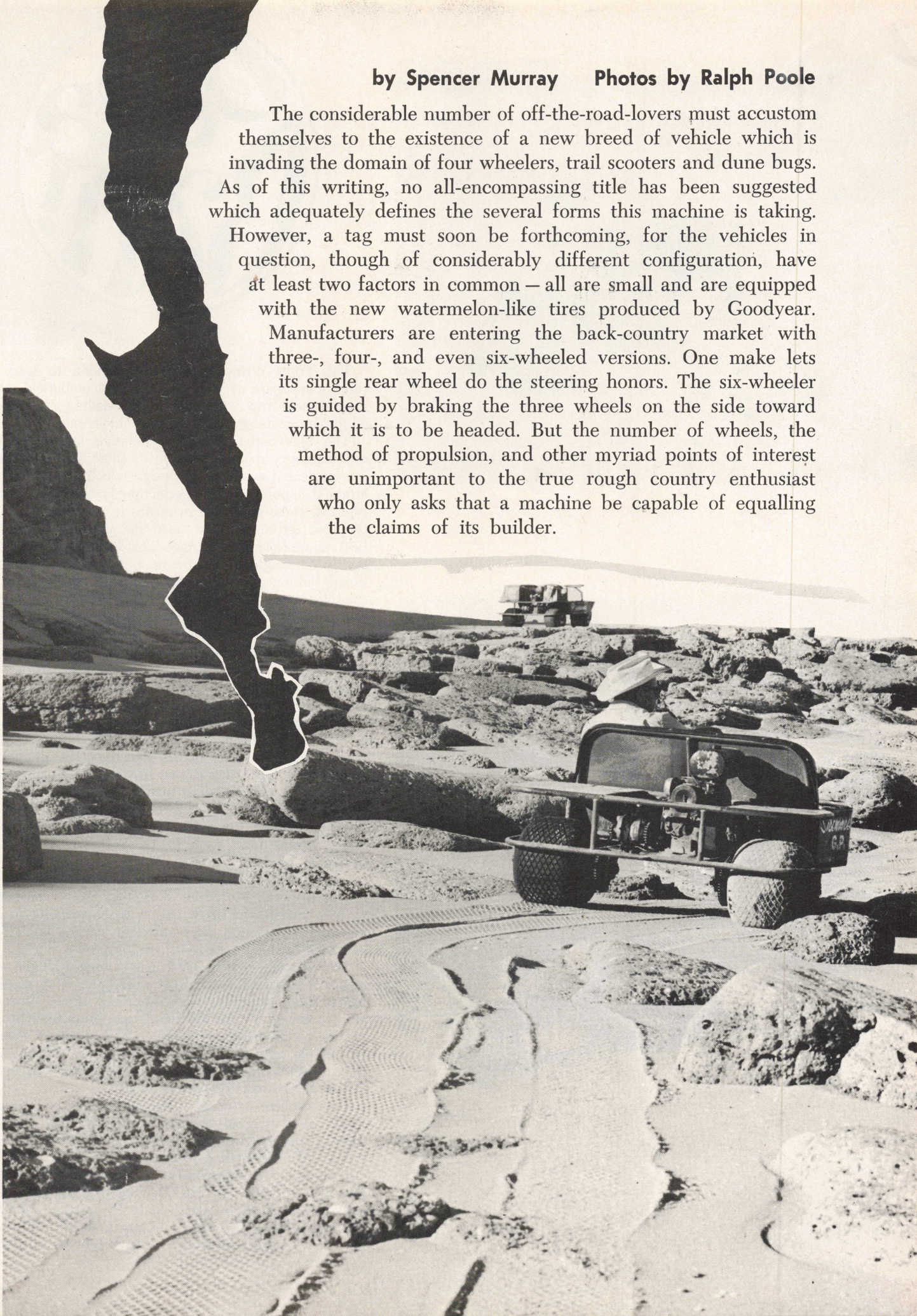
# Gaja Rall!





by Spencer Murray    Photos by Ralph Poole

The considerable number of off-the-road-lovers must accustom themselves to the existence of a new breed of vehicle which is invading the domain of four wheelers, trail scooters and dune bugs. As of this writing, no all-encompassing title has been suggested which adequately defines the several forms this machine is taking. However, a tag must soon be forthcoming, for the vehicles in question, though of considerably different configuration, have at least two factors in common — all are small and are equipped with the new watermelon-like tires produced by Goodyear. Manufacturers are entering the back-country market with three-, four-, and even six-wheeled versions. One make lets its single rear wheel do the steering honors. The six-wheeler is guided by braking the three wheels on the side toward which it is to be headed. But the number of wheels, the method of propulsion, and other myriad points of interest are unimportant to the true rough country enthusiast who only asks that a machine be capable of equalling the claims of its builder.







The FOUR WHEELER recently decided to learn if three wheels are as good as four, and embarked on a rugged field trip with one of the leading contenders in the burgeoning Terra Tire'd vehicle race.

The Sidewinder, though a relative late-comer for rough country roaming, has, in its short life, undergone a complicated evolution of design which at present has attained a point of near-perfection for vehicles of the type. Its three-point design means it can scramble over roughest terrain without need for suspension, yet its tires maintain surface contact. This means a tremendous saving of weight and expense, but it would result in severe jolting for its occupants were the tires of a standard type. But Goodyear's Terra-Tires carry only two pounds pressure when used on anything but pavement, and jolts and bumps are absorbed. These basic factors should be readily appreciated: no suspension, light weight, and a relatively smooth ride. As a side benefit, suspension maintenance is eliminated and there is nothing in the nature of springs, shocks, shackles or brackets to fail when being depended upon.

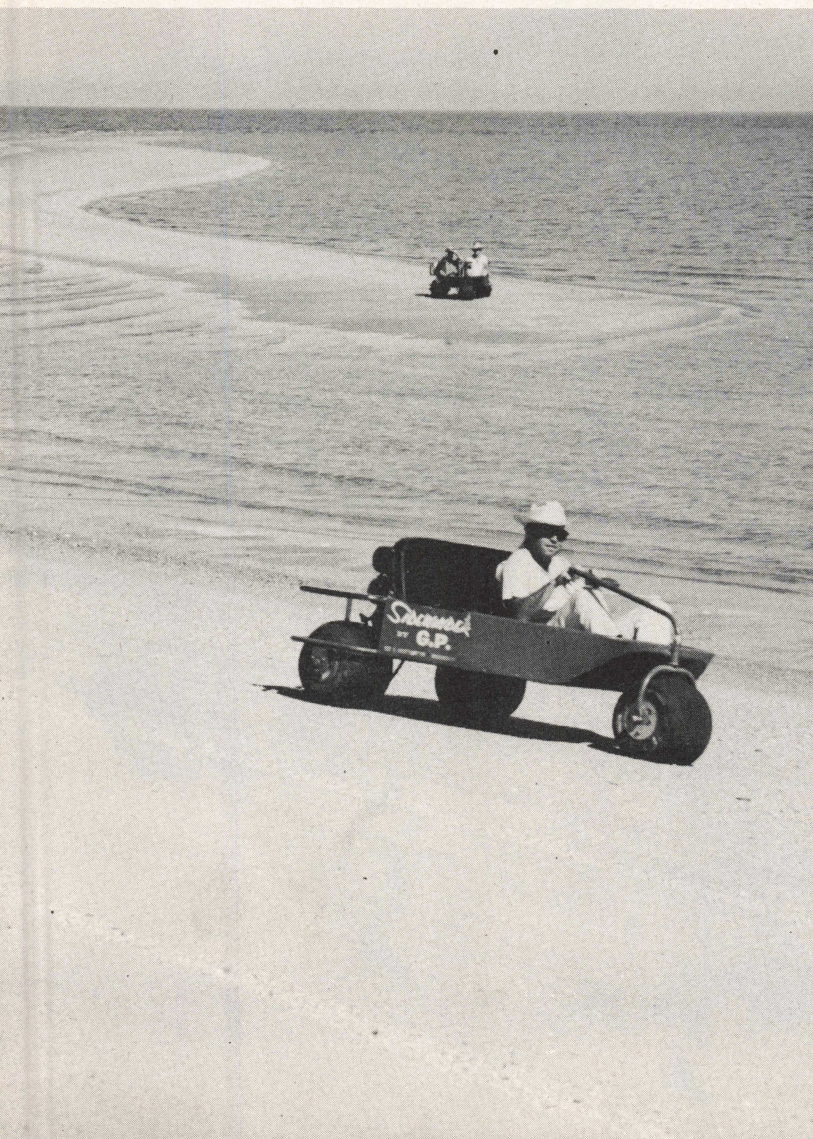
The Sidewinder is produced by GP Enterprises of Monrovia, California, under the direction of Duffy Livingstone. Duffy has drawn from his long experience of designing and building race cars — and his dedication to the science is proven by his trophy shelves. Race cars must be quick, light, maneuverable, and rugged — and from each of these realms Duffy has drawn to produce his Sidewinders.

GP Enterprises put out not one, but two Sidewinders at our disposal. Moreover, boss man Duffy consented to take part in our trials, for if a shortcoming in his machines was found, he wanted to learn what it was and take corrective measures on his production line.

We four wheelers wanted to encompass all the elements of rugged desert travel: soft dune sand, rippled beach sand, slopes of drift sand and slopes of rock. We wanted to try the Sidewinders through high brush, in water, down stoney gullies. This in itself was a formidable task for a single outing, but, fortunately, Baja California waits nearby—a rugged peninsula brim-full of all the hazards we wanted.

The weekend at hand dictated we stray not too far south, so our crew of four voted in favor of San Felipe — the nondescript fishing village — terminus of the paved road leading south from Mexicali. By transporting the two Sidewinders to San Felipe in a VW pickup — evidence of the machine's size — then off-loading and heading south along the nearly uninhabited, scalloped coast of the mighty Gulf of California, we felt we could subject our test machines to everything we sought — and then some.

*Continued on Page 30*









Rumors had been circulating for several years that a local four wheeling party had discovered a cove along the west coast of Baja, California, that was literally covered with skeletal remains of ancient wrecked ships.

For most adventure seekers the fascination of Baja is strong, but for me it took a rumor of a graveyard of ships and the encouragement and company of a seasoned Baja traveler to break the ice for a four wheel drive adventure into this unusual but readily accessible land.

We finally chased the rumor down and learned the facts first hand. Yes, there was a graveyard of ships located on the west coast of Baja! It was located immediately north of Cape Colnett which would put it about 90 miles travel below Ensenada. We heard about a breakwater along the beach with pieces of driftwood and wrecked ships stacked higher than a man's head. We listened intently about smoke blackened caves in the cliffs, heard of the discovery of an empty wooden chest with a description so vivid that you would almost expect to find Long John Silver's bullion inside.

Then came a bitter sauce that wasn't expected to top the pudding. It was a rough haul getting into the cove. Because of the precipitous cliffs along the shore of the cove it was necessary to run the beach for almost 12 miles. This could be traveled only with four wheel drive rigs or a dune buggy because of the soft sand and then, due to severe projecting cliffs extending far out into the water, could only be done twice a year when there was an extreme minus tide. Even then it might be necessary to run the rig in a foot of tricky surf. With an extreme minus tide follows an extreme high tide. If for some reason we didn't make the beach run successfully or were unable to get the fwd rig back up on high ground we could lose the rig and all our gear to the raging tide and be stranded almost 200 miles below the border in a Baja wilderness.

The prospect of adventure outweighed the risks and we went to work preparing for the trek into Baja planned to correspond with the Spring minus tide that conveniently hit during the Easter vacation.

Our plans included three travelers, Alex McDougall

**by Cloyd Sorensen, Jr.**

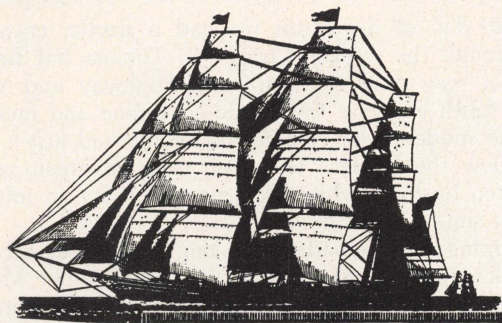




who was the only seasoned Baja traveler, Spence Maze and myself. Alex had planned in advance to haul his trailer to a spot below Ensenada on the Bay and Spence and I would tow the jeep down and meet him there.

We planned the trip carefully to correspond with a morning minus tide, allotted time to run the beach and a layover at the cove for the next minus tide necessary for our return. We packed all the food, water and gear necessary for the trip and included extra rations in case of trouble. Special attention was given to the first aid kit which included diarrhea medication. We had smallpox inoculation, requesting a certificate proving same from the physician. Proof of a successful vaccination within the last three years might be requested on re-entry into the U.S.

Checking on my coverage in Mexico for the car and Jeep I learned that they were completely covered to Ensenada. I secured a liability rider on the Jeep plus a letter from the agent stating my coverage. Many policies vary on Mexican coverage and it is a good idea to have this understood before entry into Mexico. Reasonable Mexican insurance can be purchased by the day at the border.



# Graveyard of



## LOST SHIPS

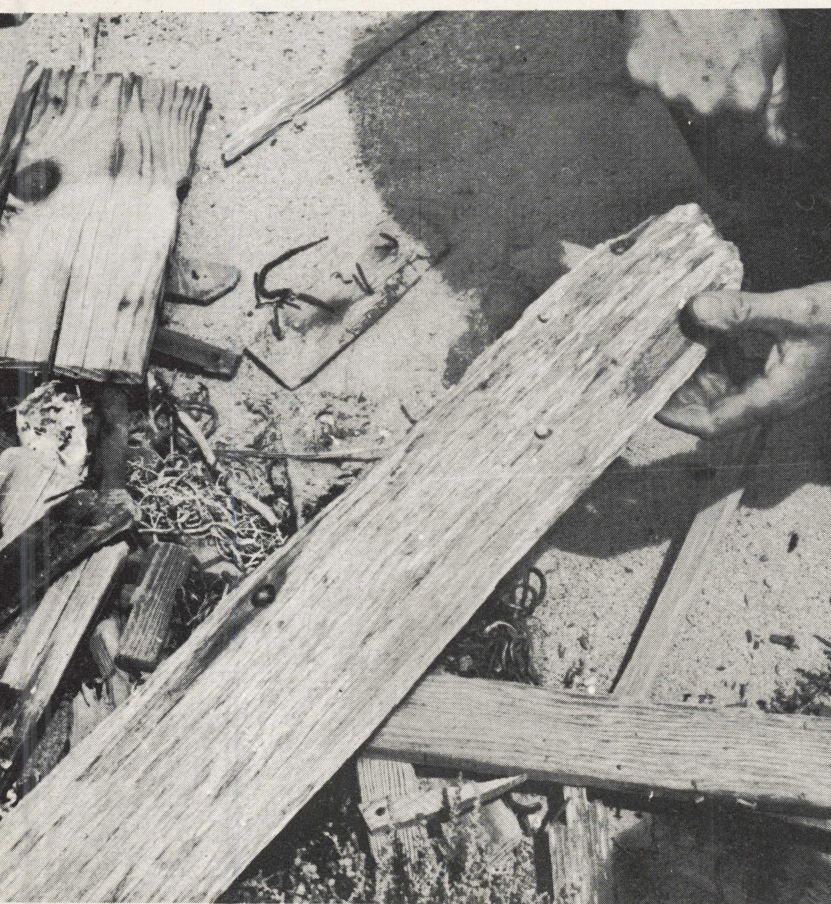


Drawing on years of experience, Alex briefed us on precautions that should be taken while in Mexico. In short they boiled down to some simple facts: Carry extra cash, obey the laws, use caution in driving through the villages and towns because the Mexican kids and animals run free and loose, avoid the native food and water, be courteous and remember that you are guests of the Mexican people.

On the day of departure we had a hectic, crawling drive through the weekend traffic in Tijuana but finally found our way onto the Ensenada Highway and were heading south enjoying the scenic coast line and marveling at the sudden color change the Pacific had just a few miles below the border. The deep emerald green water was broken by huge white breakers set off by an intense afternoon sun.

Stopping in Ensenada only long enough to fill the car's tank with last chance ethyl gasoline (Super Mexolina) we traveled a few miles below town and using a map Alex had given us, we left the highway, soon finding ourselves driving on a sandy farm road. Suddenly our road plunged over a bank and we discovered a magnificent white sand beach smack on Ensenada Bay. There was Alex's trailer standing almost alone at this camper's paradise. Had this trailer park, complete with wash rooms and running water, been in the United States during the Easter Vacation, there would have hardly been elbow room. There seems to be no official name for the place but many Americans who have been using it for years, fondly refer to it as Pickle Beach.

*Four wheelers had to find their own road into the Graveyard of ships. There they discovered driftwood, relics and hundreds of bottles that had been washed up by the tide.*





After supper in the wind-rocked trailer, we played a few hands of cards and then at low tide we unhitched the Jeep and made a trial run along the dark beach. We drove for miles along the deserted shore, the motor humming and the tires throwing sand like a sprint car on the Bonneville Salt Flats.

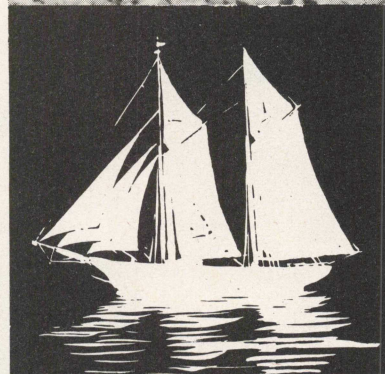
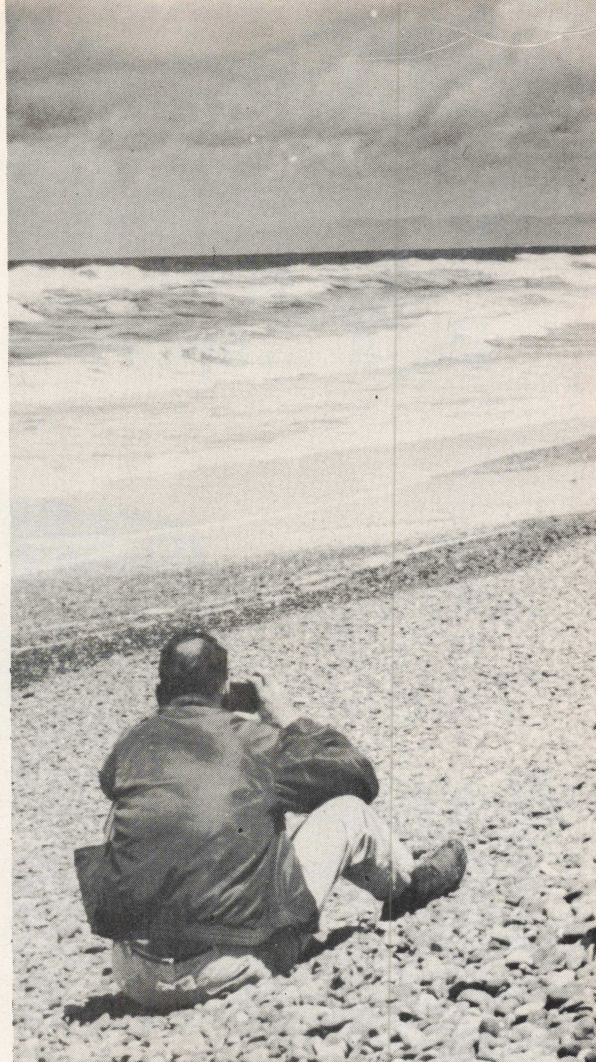
Returning with high spirits over a successful "dry run" as we hit the sack, our anticipation mounting for the next day's venture into a small piece of Baja's almost unexplored coast.

Before sunup the next morning, after checking our gear and a hasty breakfast, we were soon back on Baja's Highway heading south. The paved road was better than had been expected and our only discomfort was caused from an annoying knock from the Buick's high compression engine caused by the "Mexican ethyl" on the pull of the mountain grades.

A few miles below the trailer on Ensenada Bay, we were stopped at a small checking station and asked for our visas. Alex explained to the official that we planned to go no further than Cape Colnett and would be back in a day or two. There was a few minutes of confusion, all in Spanish, and then Alex said that in the past he had always signed the "book." With a "si, senor," we piled out of the car, walked into the office and signed the book. A few pesos changed hands and we were back on the road.

Proceeding as planned to a wide spot in the road called Rancho Grande — about 90 miles below Ensenada and a few miles beyond the end of the pavement, we inquired at the restaurants about leaving the Buick for a day or two.

In the Jeep we headed straight west 7 kilometers to Johnson Ranch on the coast and the start of our 12 mile four-wheel drive run of the beach. Arriving too early for the low tide, we spent an anxious hour beachcombing.



From the looks of the thousands of clam shells along the shore, this must be tremendous clam digging country.

When the tide was nearing its low ebb, we turned the hubs, shifted the transfer case, piled in the Jeep and hit the beach. We discovered in less than a quarter of a mile that the beach was too soft. The Jeep, wound up to a whine, could never make 12 miles of this pulling torture. Not daring to stop, we swung around and with two pushing, we high-tailed it to higher, firmer ground.

Bewildered at what had almost happened and the fact that our long and carefully planned adventure was suddenly shot down, we decided to try for the mesa, drive south about 12 miles and then head west for the cliffs. The most we could hope for now was a look at this graveyard of ships from the cliffs above.

Four wheeling it south over a picturesque but completely uninhabited mesa for nearly 12 miles, we swung west and headed straight to the cliffs. Again we were disappointed because what we had hoped would be a

*Continued on Page 35*





**Special:  
Baja Report**

**The Road To  
LOS ANGELES BAY**





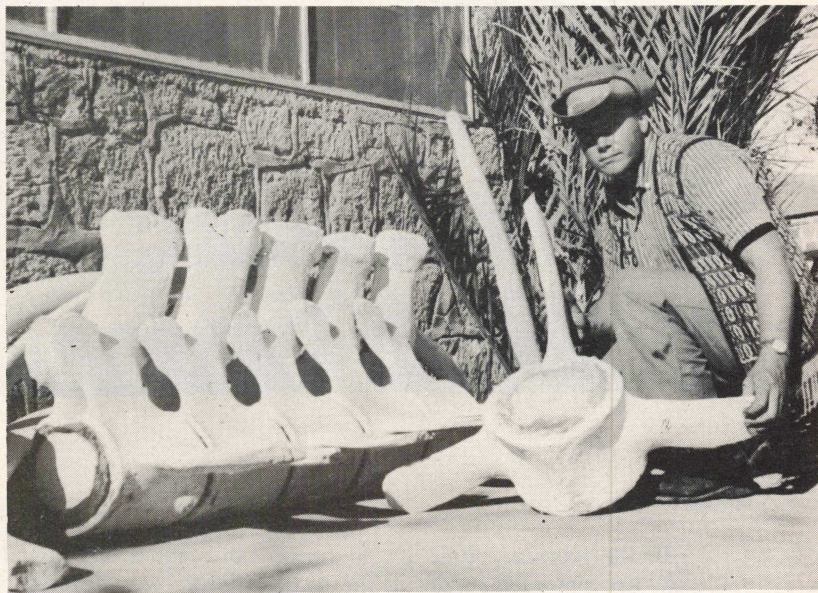


### by Roger K. Mitchell

My first explorations in Baja California took me down the back of the rugged northern mountains. With this under my belt I had a great desire to see more of this remote corner of the west. Having a week free I looked at the map trying to decide how far I could get. A large bay on the eastern side of the peninsula caught my eye. It was called *Bahia de Los Angeles*. The matter was quite simple, I would go there.

Together with a fellow geologist, Dan Horn from Pasadena, we piled into my WW II weapons carrier one Friday afternoon and headed south towards the Salton Sea and Calexico. We made camp that night in the desert near Trifolium and got an early start in the morning. By 10 a.m. we were across the border and following the well paved Mexican route No. 5. Thirty-five miles south of the border we stopped for a leisurely bottle of beer and a rest in the shaded hammocks of the Rio Hardy fishing camp. The manana land was getting to us already. From here the road goes on to cross the entrance of the Laguna Salada salt flats, and past the brightly red colored hills of marine sediments interbedded with lava. After what seemed like a long stretch of empty desert, the fishing village of San Felipe appeared out of nowhere. We ate a hardy meal and filled the truck as well as all the jerry cans with gas. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north of San Felipe there is a wide graded road leading southward across the desert. We were on it no more than a few miles before we started to notice the rare elephant trees found mainly in Baja California. As we drove further south, they became more numerous.

We made our second camp at an abandoned sulphur mine, 22 miles south of San Felipe. Here native sulphur filled fissures in granitic rocks and a small mine and smelter once operated. A jaw crusher, boiler, and two autoclaves still remain. For rock hounds and pebble puppies, there are abundant specimens to be collected everywhere. In fact, there is so much sulphur around we had quite a time locating our campfire. Everywhere we tried to build a campfire, the sulphur in the ground would burn, producing an odor that is not usually associated with campfires. We finally gave up and cooked dinner, sulphur and all.





## Los Angeles Bay



In the morning, after a cold breakfast, we continued following the coastline southward. At the small fishing village of Puertocitos, a little boy directed us to some hot springs located in some rocks on the shore line just about the high tide level. There are two pools, "warm" and "very warm" from which to choose your bathing temperature.

The road to Puertocitos is wide and at one time even had a grader over it. Standard automobiles should have little trouble getting to Puertocitos. Below Puertocitos, the road is still relatively good, but I would not recommend it for passenger cars. I measured 20% grades in two locations, but these did not necessitate using four-wheel drive.

About 20 miles below San Felipe (28 miles below Puertocitos) is a new fishing camp with the unlikely name of "Okies Landing." This is not marked on most maps, and like Puertocitos, gasoline is occasionally available. In this area there are some long stretches

of road. It had rained recently and the desert was covered with a carpet of grass and wildflowers. The desolate looking mountains to the west are still more volcanic lavas interbedded with shale and sandstone.

The last fishing camp on this road is at Gonzaga Bay. We stopped and watched in fascination as some Mexican fishermen were cutting up and salting a 14-foot shark. The fisherman said he had accidentally got tangled up in their nets, and it had taken them most of the morning to land it and bring it ashore. Shortly after leaving Gonzaga Bay, the road turns inland, and up a broad valley. Here we made our third camp amid thousands of the strange looking elephant trees.

Inland the road from Gonzaga Bay has never been graded, and does not have the washboard surface. The road crosses a wide valley and then becomes very winding as it weaves in and out of an area of large granite boulders and sandy washes. The region re-

minded me very much of parts of Joshua Tree National Monument in Southern California.

After traveling many miles we sighted a windmill located in a large wash. This we found out, was Las Arrastras de Ariola. We stopped and had coffee with a retired US air force colonel who operated a nearby turquoise mine. He had several Mexican miners working for him and he transported his turquoise to the United States by airplane. Good drinking water is available here and quail are often seen in the nearby canyons. Here the road forks, one branch going west to Laguna Cahpala and the main Baja route No. 1, while the left fork continues southward toward Mission Calamajue. We chose the latter.

The site of Mission Calamajue was discovered in 1753, but the Jesuit fathers did not actually build the mission until 1766. It was abandoned shortly thereafter because of the alkaline nature of the water, and today only a few low adobe walls remain. The ruins are located on a bluff overlooking a small stream. Nearby on the same bluff is the remains of a mill, once used for the crushing and concentrating of gold ore.

The road descends the bluff and follows the stream into a gorge cut through steeply dipping slate and serpentine rocks. The stream bed is the road for several miles and even four-wheel drive vehicles must be driven with skill to avoid getting stuck in the mud. There are many good camping sites in the canyon and quail and other game are abundant. The main Baja route No. 1 is reached about 52 miles from Gonzaga Bay. We followed this "main road" for six miles and then turned southeast at a weather-beaten sign saying "Bahia de los Angeles 78 kilometros."

At one point we hit a particularly hard bump and the motor stopped immediately. After trying to start the motor unsuccessfully we made a quick check and found the main battery had broken from its mount and had tipped over. Fortunately no harm was done and we could proceed.

We stopped at the ruins of Desengana, an old mining operation. In this area the desert is lush with plant life found exclusively in Baja California. The elephant trees, giant cardon cactus, and the weird cirio plants coupled with an ominous silence of the vast expanse, made us feel like spacemen looking at a strange planet for the first time.

We had traveled 30 of the 47 miles between the main road and Bahia de Los Angeles when it got dark. We had used all the gas in our jerry cans and the needle on the main tank was ap-

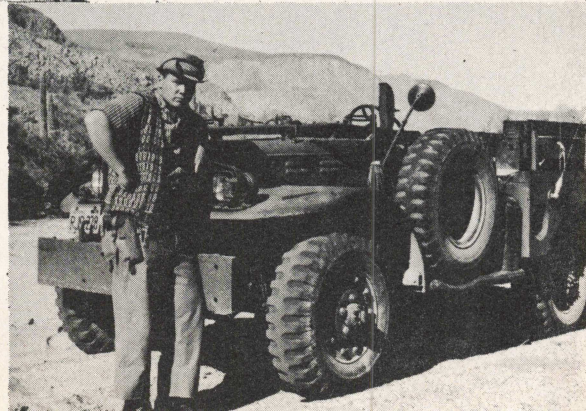
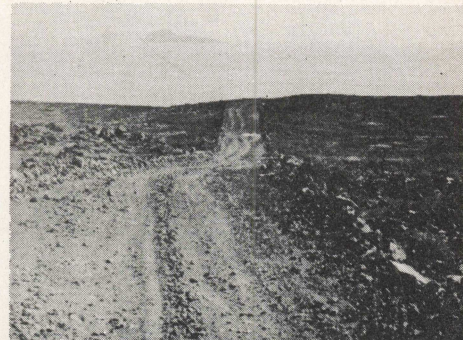




proaching the empty mark. We continued to wind in and out of the mountains and finally we saw a single light far below us. By this time we were running on the "fumes" and it seemed to take forever to reach the light. We passed several dark houses and then could see our guiding light was coming from the open door of a large building. We parked outside and rather cautiously walked in.

To our surprise the room was filled with 20 to 30 Americans, all dressed in clean sports clothing, and having what looked like a banquet. Dan and I must have looked like Pancho Villa's

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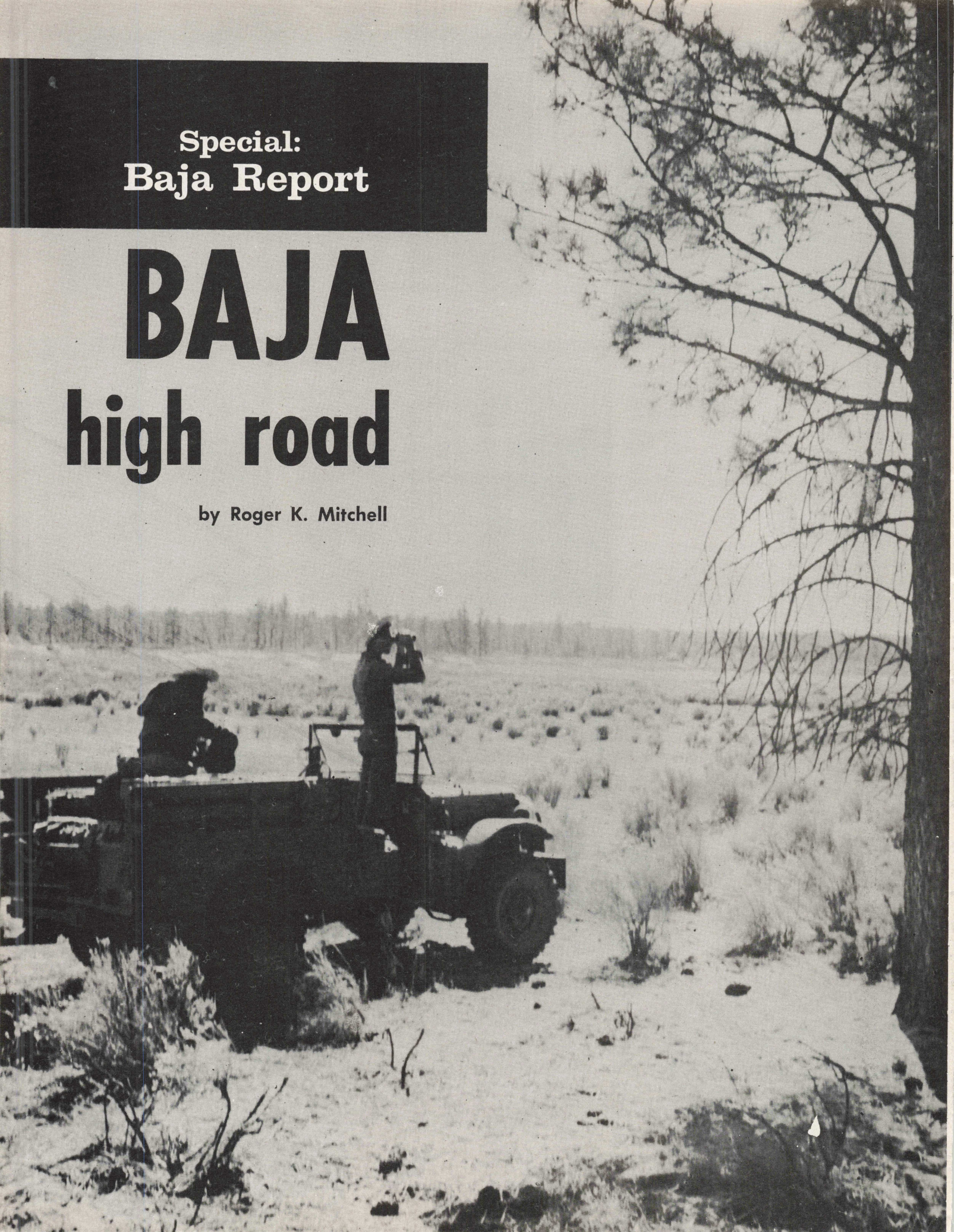




**Special:  
Baja Report**

# **BAJA** **high road**

by Roger K. Mitchell





After looking at several maps of Baja California I noticed that most of the peninsula is desert, all except the northern-most mountains ranges, the Sierra Juarez and the San Pedro Martir. The former is accessible by dirt road for almost its entire length, and the latter only by trail.

I decided to look a little further into these mountains, so together with a couple of friends, Jim Roberts and Bill McGill, we piled into my WW II weapons carrier and headed south. We carried our usual 60 gallons of gasoline, 17 gallons of water, two spare, eight ply tires, numerous spare parts, a GI pioneer kit, in addition to the normal camping equipment.

We crossed the border at Tijuana and turned east on Mexican Highway Number Two. From Tijuana the road crosses Rodriguez dam and through the rolling farmlands to Tecate. Tecate is another border crossing point but the town is probably best known for the brewery located there. The road continues east through valleys of olive orchards and vineyards. Slowly the road ascends a high plateau where there are scattered ranches.

The northern end of the Sierra Juarez road leaves from Mexican Highway Number Two at a point one mile west of the village of La Rumorosa. Turn south at "Cafe Las Delicias de Acapulco." This road is 38 miles east of Tecate, and 50 miles west of Mexicali. (Another road 7.6 miles west of this begins at "El Condor" Mobilgas station, and joins the first road after ten miles. The first road is used a little more than the latter and consequently is in a little better condition.

The dirt road gradually climbs southward through chaparral country into forest of Juniper and Pinon Pine. About 14 miles south of the paved road we began to notice a great many mounds of gravel, typical of a placer mining operation. These placer diggings extend for several miles, and are centered around the old mining camp of Campo Gavilaes. Gradually the vegetation again changes. This time to a vast forest of virgin Western Yellow Pine. Numerous side roads lead off to the right and left. Some lead to small ranches but most are left over from placer mining operations of years past. As most road junctions are unmarked it is a good idea to always take the road that shows signs of the greatest use. We used this as rule of thumb and never went wrong.

Laguna Hanson is reached 40 miles south of Mexican Highway Number Two. In the past, Laguna has been filled with water but in recent years it has dried up due to the lack of rain. This area is very scenic and good camping places are abundant. About three miles south of Laguna Hanson is the Sierra Juarez sawmill. Several hundred people live at the sawmill, and rather questionable water is available. A few miles south of the sawmill the pine trees begin to disappear and the countryside once again turns to chaparral.

Just before entering the wide canyon that leads to the Ojos Negros Valley, there is a 4.5 mile shortcut that eliminates the need to go down into the valley to Ojos Negros, thus saving 17.5 miles. This shortcut takes the form of a sandy wash, and may (or may not) be recognized as a road. Like most other side roads, this shortcut is not marked, and unless there is someone nearby to ask, it might be best to take the "main" road to Ojos Negros, and then double back.

The road continues through small valleys containing several ranches with occasional springs that seep across the road. About 25 miles south of Ojos Negros the road forks at the site of a tall lone pine tree. (Pino solo). Why this single pine tree decided to grow here is somewhat of a mystery, because all the other trees within 30 miles are Oak, Juniper or Pinon Pine. The left fork goes directly to Valle de Trinidad, while the right fork goes to the old mining town of El Alamo, and then rejoins the other fork.

The gold and silver deposits of El Alamo were discovered in the latter part of the 19th century, and have been worked almost continually ever since. Activity has been dwindling in the past several years and today only about 20 families live in El Alamo. We stopped and visited an old friend, Marshall Hahn. Marshall has lived in the area 17 years, and is the Engineer-owner of Alamo's only working gold mine. He has a 10 stamp mill and at the present time has 14 miners developing a new orebody just outside of town. Reliable drinking water and gasoline are sometimes available at El Alamo.

From El Alamo the road follows the air strip outside of town and drops gently into a broad valley. About 25 miles south of El Alamo the road begins to drop into Valle de Trinidad. The road drops steeply down a canyon and grades of about 15% are encountered for about a mile.



*Lonesome pigs against a background of magnificent Sierra high country is typical of the Mexican scenery in this area.*



*One of the pleasures of four wheeling in Baja are the infrequent fishing villages which make colorful and interesting stops.*



*Baja is a primitive, remote area. The best, and often the only, facilities are those the four wheeler carries in his rig.*





Valle de Trinidad is a large basin completely surrounded by lava covered mountains. It is approximately 20 miles long and eight to 10 miles wide. From the village of La Zapopita two roads lead to the Gulf of California and the paved Mexicali-San Felipe road. One of these roads is no longer used because it crosses muddy salt flats. This road is passible to four-wheel drive vehicles only after dry periods, and comes out a half mile north of the fishing village of San Felipe.

Another road, more commonly used, gently descends a canyon and then crosses a large valley, past a volcanic cinder cone, and on to the paved Mexicali-San Felipe road at a point 29.8 miles north of San Felipe.

Immediately outside of La Zapopita two cattle fences cross the road. The signs say "Please Close The Gate." In this area there are some magnificent growths of ocotillo, barrel cactus, cholla, and other varieties of cacti. Quail are commonly seen in the canyon, along with numerous other birds. This is the most desolate stretch of road along the entire route. In the 47 miles between La Zapopita and the paved road, no ranches or other signs of life are seen. This part of the route however, offers

# BAJA

## high road



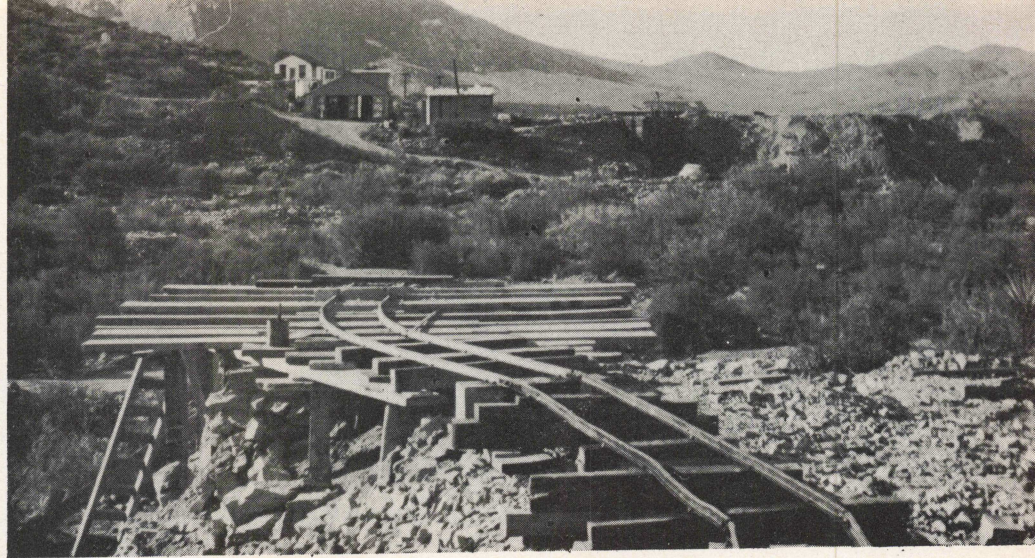
*Signs along any Mexican road are scarce and few can really be depended on. These proved to be accurate but had no mileage.*



some excellent views of Baja's 10,126 foot mountain, Providence Peak (*Pichaco del Diablo*). From where the Sierra Juarez road ends at the paved Mexicali-San Felipe road, it is 95 miles north to Mexicali and the US border.

A small working knowledge of Spanish or even a pocket phrase book would prove to be a valuable asset. Road conditions and directions may be obtained from local inhabitants although I would suggest taking everything with a grain of salt. Everything in this world is relative, and when a local resident says a road is *bueno* it may be . . . during the dry season! However, I have always found the Mexican's idea of *malo* has always coincided with mine. To avoid confusion, always refer to distances in *Kilometros*. Many Mexicans living in northern Baja use the term *milla* (mile) interchangeably with the term *kilometro*, while others using the term *milla* actually mean miles. It is a good idea never to ask a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no. I have found the Mexican people so eager to please, that they would not dream of telling a stranger no to anything.

There is no place along the entire Sierra Juarez road where gasoline and



reliable drinking water may be found. It would be prudent therefore to bring extra quantities of both along. A shovel and an extra spare tire might also be useful.

Everywhere in the interior of Baja California we have found the Mexicans quick with a smile and very friendly. They are pleased that *Norteamericanos* are taking an interest in their land. In recent years more and more is being

written about Baja California. Unfortunately many of the trips written about go far below the border where considerable time is required for making the trip. This is one trip however, that serves as an excellent introduction to Baja, and only requires two or three days. Incidentally, Mexican Government tourist permits are not required for any portion of this trip.



While main portion of the Baja high road traveled mountainous country, a few miles near the end went through desert area with its particularly heavy growth of cactus.

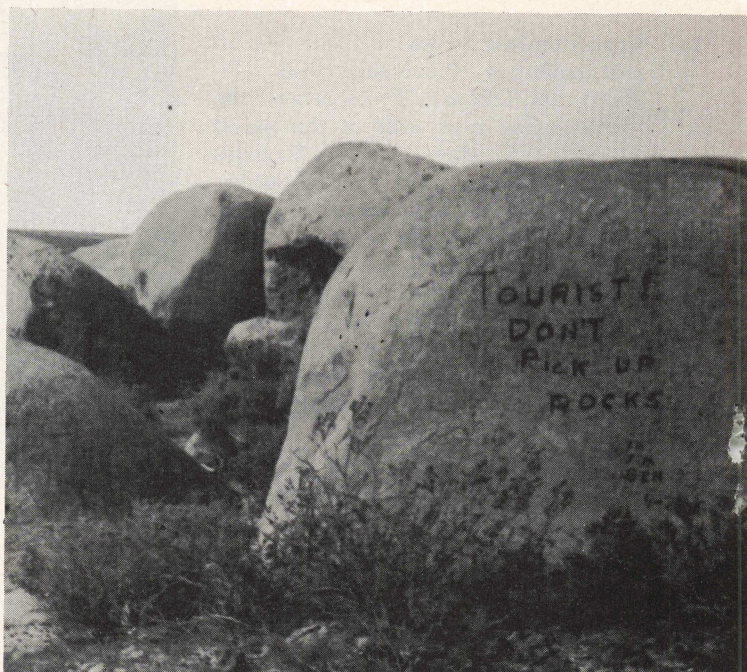


WW II weapons carrier which has been restored to trail condition by author proved more than a match for Baja's worst roads. High clearance was particularly useful.





*Model A truck made trip without mechanical trouble.*



*Don't pickup rocks, especially this one.*

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# Model "A" Trek

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*Although these pictures could have been taken 30 years ago, they were shot in 1962 when four Los Angeles men: Joe McClellan, Lyle McNeil, Wesely Norgaard and Jim Talmadge made a trek to La Paz, Baja. The story proves the trip can be made in almost any car. However, in this case each man was an expert mechanic, and Joe McClellan is owner of a firm specializing in rebuilding and supplying parts for obsolete Ford cars.*





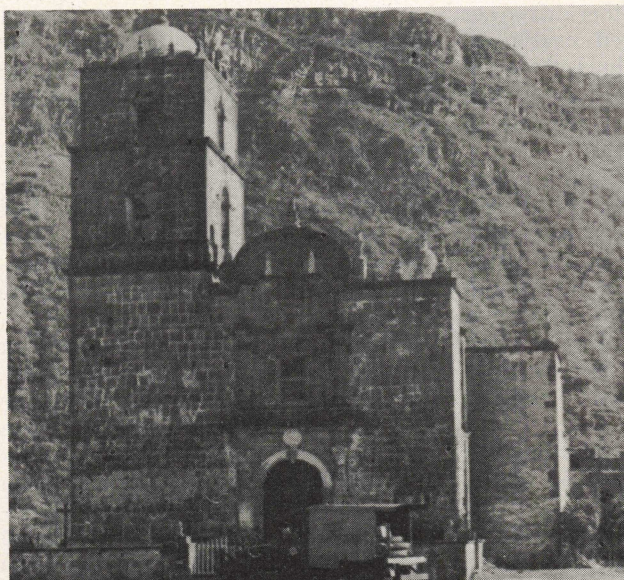
# Special: Baja Report



*Wide body made a tight squeeze many times.*



*Tires were necessity, trip ruined four.*



*Although restricted in back country travel, group made many side trips.*



*Two wheelers can make trip, but have troubles four wheelers drive by.*



# BAJA BALL

There is a village south from San Felipe — some 50 miles as the rugged outdoorsmen who have braved the barren trail will tell you. Puertocitos, the maps call it. Little port. But though it lies on the Gulf, even as does San Felipe, the horrible connecting road winds far inland to avoid the rocky, impassable ridges which break from the north-south mountain spine of Baja and tumble directly into the Gulf.

If a way could be found to reach Puertocitos by paralleling the shore, the driving distance between it and San Felipe could be markedly reduced. And, too, since those striving to reach Puertocitos are primarily fishermen, and since the road they must follow runs far from the sea, they have no hope of pursuing their sport unless they negotiate the full extent of the trail. By breaking a path along the water's edge, our followers would be benefitted by being able to fish from anywhere along the route without having to force themselves all the way through to Puertocitos.

We spent our first day in San Felipe familiarizing ourselves with the Sidewinder's idiosyncrasies. Any given spot a half mile from town is as rough and inconducive to travel as one expects to find in Baja. Familiarization is a necessary prerequisite to back-country travel, for the record books are full of people who deprived themselves of an outing simply because they didn't take the time to learn their vehicle's capabilities.

Tides in the upper regions of the Gulf reach to 44 feet late in October — the second highest tides in the world — and as they had not abated much by the early November date of our trip, we strove first to learn if the Sidewinders could safely and rapidly carry us inland should our passage ahead be blocked just when the encroaching tide started its climb.

On that first day we had a pretty fair idea of what a Sidewinder can and cannot do. Briefly summed up: the Sidewinder can go nearly any place a fwd rig can go — and a lot of places a fwd rig can't! I say *nearly* any place, for the long, steep slope of a drifting dune did halt the versatile Sidewinder. The machine's climbing ability is every bit as good as a four-wheel drive ve-

hicle's, but the more common off-road machines have an excess of power which lets them hit a dune at high speed with their momentum carrying them to the top. The Sidewinder produces but seven horsepower, and its resulting top speed is somewhat less than cars of other types. Thus we couldn't assault a high dune at a fast speed and roll on up the face. It should be noted, however, that dune climbing is, 99 percent of the time, for fun rather than necessity. Though we traversed miles of steep dune land, we could always get where we were going without tackling a near-vertical dune.

Several times our passage might have been blocked by a narrowing canyon had we been in anything but a Sidewinder. But the car's narrow width let us sail right through spots where a fwd rig would have become inextricably wedged. Once or twice we became, as the saying goes, hung up. But by simply stepping out and carrying the light Sidewinders a few feet, we could resume our trip. Try *that* with a fwd rig!

The Sidewinder has an exclusive feature not found on competitive makes of vehicles. It has a transmission giving two speeds ahead and a *reverse*! Several times we backed out of dangerous spots where there was insufficient turning room. And, while we enjoyed sailing along the beach at a zestful 25 miles an hour, we also enjoyed having full engine torque while creeping at two or three mph. The Sidewinder's clutch is centrifugal, hence there is no clutch pedal to work and no complicated linkage to become fouled.

The odd appearance of the Sidewinder, rather like a handleless wheelbarrow with an engine, is another feature of its versatility. Neither driver nor companion can be jolted overboard, and the shape of the "bucket" serves to deflect bushes and limbs away from the occupants. One rides securely in a Sidewinder, not *on* it.

Our first night spent sleeping peacefully on the beach made us doubly aware of the Sidewinder's easy gait. After a day's exploring in the usual machine one is wracked by bumps and bruises from bounding over rocks, from being clobbered on the leg or thigh by projecting body parts. But we Sidewinder riders missed all that — delightfully so.

The first point southward from San Felipe is a prominent headland identified on the hydrographic charts as Punta Diggs. It is simply the first of the endless capes that mark the entire shoreline of the wandering Baja peninsula. (And the writer has seen them all, having circumnavigated Baja by

boat.) The wide, shelving strand gives way to a narrowed beach backed by low sand cliffs, which increase in height until the point proper is reached. Here, the beach disappears altogether and one must swim deep water to round the point or head inland, which we did. We found a narrow gully chiseling through the bluff and made a try with one Sidewinder while the other waited on safer terrain. Within a few moments, the leading 'Winder appeared atop the cliffs, its occupants gesturing gaily to those below.

After a half hour of scrambling over low sand hills and floundering down brush laden gullies, we dropped back to the shore below Punta Diggs and again followed the water's edge on a white sand beach that will someday become a shell hunter's paradise.

Jumping fish abound throughout the reaches of the Gulf and we took to betting where the next one would break after a straying insect. Their "splat" when they dropped back could be heard for some distance.

At the nameless second point, some 12 miles below San Felipe, we encountered a veritable amphibious tank trap. Sharp boulders, some projecting two feet from the sand, stretched from the water on our left to the inland bluffs on our right. The old formation was several hundred feet across. It wouldn't have been impassable to the more rugged back-country cars, but it was a breeze in the Sidewinders. The large, soft Terra-Tires rolled over the no-man's land like semi-deflated balloons. It was high gear all the way.

Just beyond lay the point proper — vertical cliffs of sandstone that dropped a hundred feet into the sea. The only way around without back-tracking was up an eroded, narrow gully choked with crevasses and slippery stones. The first 'Winder tackled "Impossible Gulch" — and made it; but not until the driver had stepped out and "driven" the Sidewinder up by working the throttle by hand while he scrambled alongside the empty machine. This, we had to agree, was something no four wheeler would attempt. An odd maneuver, perhaps, but just another Sidewinder asset.

Midday caught us a little more than halfway to Puertocitos. We had admittedly spent too much time chasing one another over the beach, and just plain goofing off by hunting shells and driving into the water whenever the whim took us. We had earlier knocked together a trailer to carry our camping equipment (and it was an overly large amount) but as it was shod with ordinary tires, it had been proven ridiculous to try and haul it through the sand.



Thus, though the Sidewinders are designed for the stowage of a lot of spare equipment, we had voted to make just a one-day affair out of the journey and so had little besides extra gasoline and our lunch aboard. Thus we elected to turn around and retrace our odd, three-tired tracks to San Felipe. Having seen all of Baja's shores, as it was earlier noted, yours truly could vouch that the remainder of the coast to Puertocitos was far more easily traversible than the first leg. Therefore, although we didn't actually reach our destination that day, we *could* have very easily.

Investigating our surrounding terrain somewhat further inland on our return trip, we happened across a one-man colony shown on some Baja maps as Aqua de Chale — Charlie's Water. The lone, aging inhabitant greeted our arrival from the sea with little apparent alarm, though no one had accosted him from that trackless direction before. But such is the way of the unexcitable Mexican and he accepted our

offer of a ride without so much as batting either of his twinkling eyes.

Our trip via Sidewinder proved at least two important things to us. Puertocitos can be reached by the coast (if one has the machine that can do it) and they proved themselves. Our crew agreed that the machines had gone where no other machine could have gone. Other vehicles might have reached our turn-around point in the same or maybe even less time, but they would have been forced to travel laboriously and much further inland, thereby robbing their drivers of much of the beautiful Gulf-scape that we had so thoroughly enjoyed. Four-wheel drive rigs, even trail scooters, would, in many instances, have been forced to make inland "portages" while we revelled in the cool, relaxing breezes from the awesome Gulf. We collected shells and other bits of flotsam from the beach by the simple expedient of reaching a hand down to the ground — no need to stop and crawl out. We drove

inland through impossibly soft sand to investigate mysterious mounds without even having to downshift. As we rode swiftly and comfortably, first the driver then the rider alternating with steering chores to relieve his companion — due to the centrally positioned, convenient tiller.

We suffered one mechanical malfunction — when a headlong dive was taken from a sheer-sided, dune. The front wheel steering head parted from the frame when the 'Winder crashed to earth in a shower of sprayed sand. But it was nevertheless driven to San Felipe, where a bit of welding cured the ill, and Duffy has since strengthened this one weak point on all following models. We had a real ball, learned at lot, and came away with but a single misgiving; there was insufficient time to allow a 700 mile trip to the tip of the fabulous Baja Peninsula at Cabo San Lucas.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, JULY 2, 1946 AND JUNE 11, 1946 (74 STAT. 208) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF Four Wheeler published monthly at Tarzana, California, for October, 1962.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, R. F. Ames, 5550 Reseda Blvd., Tarzana, Calif.

Editor, R. F. Ames, 5550 Reseda Blvd., Tarzana, Calif.

Managing Editor, Shirley Lee, 5550 Reseda Blvd., Reseda, Calif.

Business Manager, Gene Brown, 5550 Reseda Blvd., Tarzana, Calif.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)

R. F. Ames, 5550 Reseda Blvd., Tarzana, Calif.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

R. F. AMES

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 31st day of October 31, 1962.

(SEAL) ROBERT E. TANNER

Notary Public

6851 Topanga Canyon Blvd.  
Canoga Park, Calif.

(My commission expires March 23, 1965)



## SIDEWINDER SPECIFICATIONS

Overall length: 76 inches

Overall width: 56 inches

Overall height: 32 inches

Weight: 210 lbs.

Chassis: Elyria steel tubing, heli-arcs jig welded, one-piece design.

Engine: Kohler, air-cooled, single cylinder, power options; 4.5 to 7 hp.

Drive train: Optional transmission (2 speeds forward, one reverse). Automatic centrifugal clutch. Steel drive sprockets. Axles and shafts equipped with self-aligning bearings.

Tires: Goodyear Terra-Tires, 12.0" x 16.0". Low pressure, tubeless.

Brake: Foot actuated, Bendix. Internal expanding, operates both rear wheels.

Upholstery: Elastic-back, heavy duty, ebony black. Poly-foam padded.

Performance: With 2-speed transmission; 7 mph in low and reverse, 25 mph in high. Without transmission; 20 mph.

Fuel: Ordinary gasoline. Tank holds 1 1/4 gallons. Mileage, 40 mpg depending upon terrain.

Transportation: Can be carried in pickup truck or station wagon. Optional kit permits towing as a trailer.

Capacity: Up to three adults, with sleeping bags, spare fuel, etc.

Availability: Production meeting demand at present.

Cost: \$595.00 to \$795.00, depending upon optional equipment desired.

Manufacturer: GP Enterprises,  
152 East Huntington Dr.,  
Monrovia, Calif.





Dune buggies are becoming more common each day, and the VW conversion with its fantastic power to weight ratio is currently one of the most popular. The outfit pictured on these pages was built by Bill Chisolm of North Hollywood, Calif.

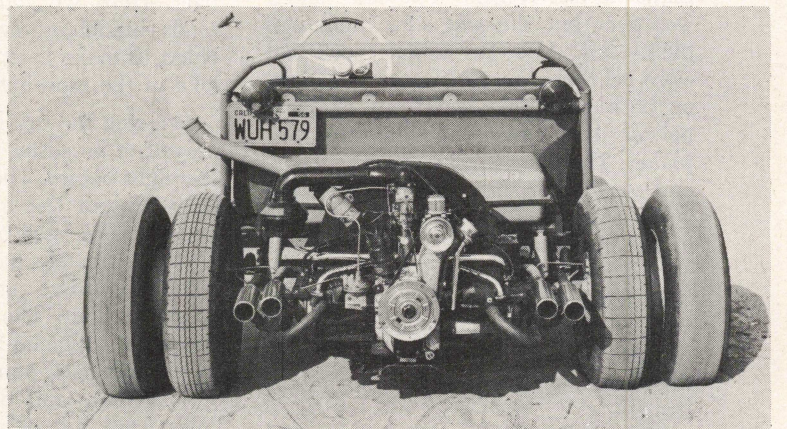
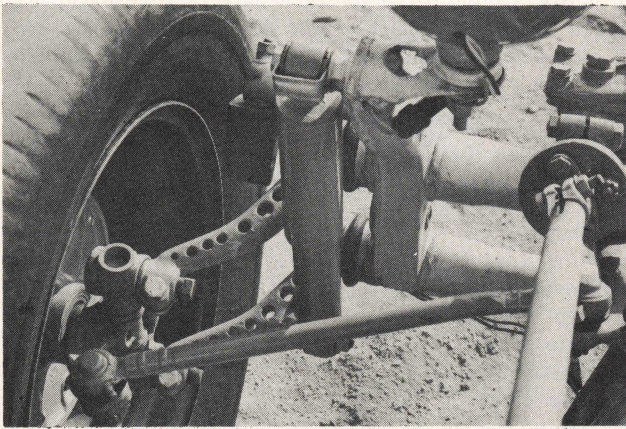
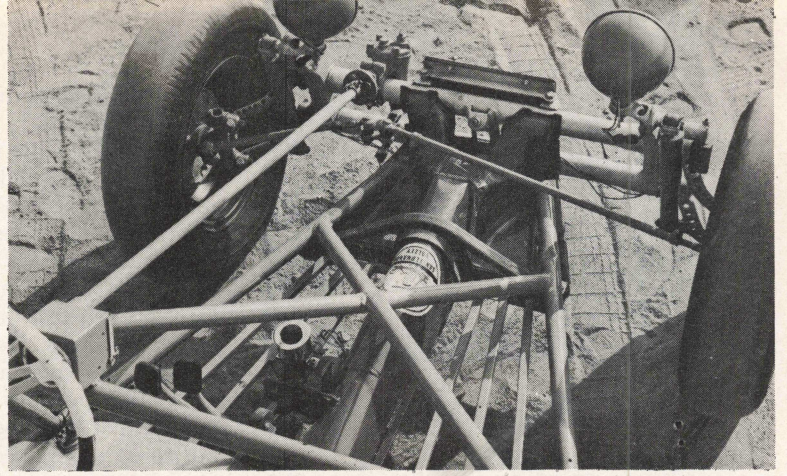
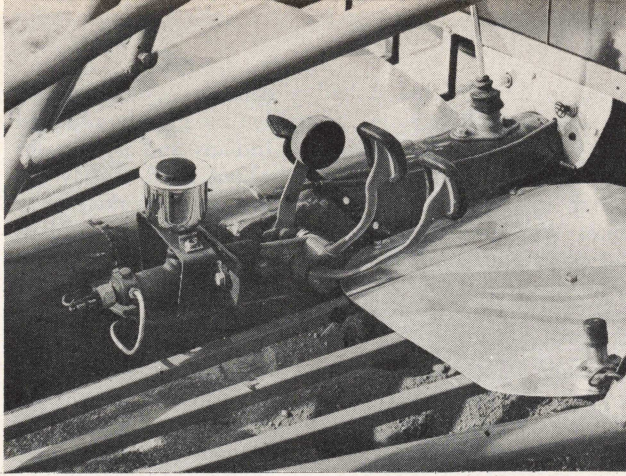
The most unusual features are the rear dual wheels. Most VW fans have stuck with wide wheels and big tires. Bill's rears are 9:50x14 which is usually the tire the enthusiast with single rear wheels use. This means that Bill, who runs the pressure at 3½ psi off the road, has almost the identical flotation he would if his rig was fwd. Of course, he doesn't have any pulling power from the front wheels; but since his weight ratio follows the usual dune buggy practice of almost 90% on the rear wheels he has the rubber where he needs it. The entire outfit weighs in at around 990 pounds.

The engine is a souped up VW which has been stroked, balanced and the heads ported. It has a special racing cam and a transporter clutch. The transmission is a '61 transporter which gives a slightly higher ratio.

The outfit was made up especially to take Bill down the Baja peninsula and two years ago he made the entire trip to La Paz. Incidentally, Bill has a plan kit which has blueprints for the entire job. Those who are interested can get the kit for \$4.95 from Bill Chisolm, Box 2498, Sepulveda, Calif.

# VW: HOT









## Los Angeles Bay

advance guard by the hush that came over the room. The proprietress, Senora Diaz, came over and welcomed us to Bahia de Los Angeles. She said dinner was over but she was sure there was plenty left. After the initial shock had worn off there were plenty of questions on both sides. We found out all these persons had flown down in three airplanes. The planes were parked outside, and we had in fact driven across the landing strip, but had failed to see either in the darkness. Shortly after, Senora Diaz brought us large bowls of turtle soup followed by a huge platter of corvina, fried potatoes, tortillas, and a pot of coffee. Several hours later we "waddled" out and camped on the nearby beach.

The following morning we returned to Casa Diaz for breakfast and to pay our bill. The meals cost us 12½ pesos each (\$1.00) and in addition we bought 15 gallons of aviation gasoline which was 40 cents a gallon and the only fuel available. Originally Senora Diaz quoted us a price of 50 cents per gallon, but when we paid in pesos she reduced it to 40 cents a gallon.

We were running short on time so we could only afford to spend the morning at Bahia de Los Angeles. Fishing here is excellent, especially in the spring. Corvina, grouper, black sea bass, yellowtail, totuava, and baya are among the varieties of fish abundantly caught. Giant sea turtles, rock oysters, crabs, lobster and clams are also collected. There are also many good beaches for swimming, the water in the Gulf of California is warmer than the ocean, and good swimming often lasts into November.

We left Bahia de Los Angeles at the same time as our airborne friends. It would take them less than three hours to reach Los Angeles, us more than three hard dusty days. To them, however, it was just another weekend jaunt. To us it was a rich and rewarding experience.

We took a slightly different route back, reaching the main route No. 1 at the village of Punta Prieta. Here we bought the last 10 gallons of gas in town (also 40 cents per gallon).

We decided to return home by the main route No. 1, rather than taking the east coast route we had come down on. It was soon evident that the "main" route was much more rough than the little used east coast route. We came upon a 2½-ton truck full of cattle which was stuck in the mud. The driver unloaded the cattle and we pulled him out of the mire. He said he had been waiting for someone to come along since the previous evening. To our culture that may seem like a long time but these experienced Baja truck drivers have a world of patience, besides, what else could he do? It was almost dark when we reached Laguna Chapala. Here we found a labyrinth of roads branching everywhere. We decided to make camp and cross the dry lake in the morning.

Crossing the dry lake in the morning proved to be easier than it had seemed the night before. There were giant mud holes around the margin of the lake, but once we got on the flat surface it was extremely hard and for several miles we drove an unbelievable 50 miles per hour. The road from Rancho Chapala to Rancho San Ignacio is very rocky and has numerous chuckholes, both shallow and deep. These chuckholes were full of water, hiding their true depth. The weapons carrier roared right through but the high centers between ruts could give other vehicles trouble, including bobtail four wheel drive rigs! The road climbs several mountains and finally ascends a pass. This pass is impassible for *all* vehicles up to as much as several days after a rain. The road descends to the pretty country around Santa Ynez. There are several springs in the area and we forded across the second stream of our trip. The rocks changed from the volcanic material we had been driving on since we left Punta Prieta, to a granite which made much faster and smoother riding. There are several canyons near Catavina Springs which are lined with fine stands of native palm trees. (*Washingtonia filifera* and *Washingtonia gracilis*.)

We stopped and watched two Mexican miners operating an arrastre. This crude method of crushing gold ore was abandoned 100 years ago, but here deep in the middle of the Baja desert, two miners were still using it to eke out a living.

About dark we came upon the ruins of Mission San Fernando. We made camp and the following morning looked around. Mission San Fernando is the only mission in Baja California founded by the Franciscan order. Junipero Serra established it in 1769 while on his way north to what is now California. At one

time it had a sizeable population but a series of epidemics greatly reduced the number of Indians and it was finally abandoned about 1818. Today the mission's fields are being worked by a couple of families but only crumbling adobe walls mark the church.

From Mission San Fernando the road goes up and down many steep hills (impassible after a rain) and finally after reaching the crest we came upon *La Turquesa*, a turquoise mine. One lone miner was patiently chipping the thin veins of turquoise from the volcanic rock.

The road descends a wash to the sandy Arroyo del Rosario and then on to the coastal village of El Rosario. El Rosario is the jumping off place for southward bound travelers and limited supplies and gasoline are usually available. We stopped to see Senora Espinoza, a person well known to Baja travelers, Mexican and American alike. In the back of her store she showed us some enormous fossil ammonites which were taken from the local sandstone cliffs along the shore. Ammonites are snail-like looking creatures that lived in the bottom of the sea 75,000,000 years ago. Rather than being snail sized however, these measure between two and three feet across!

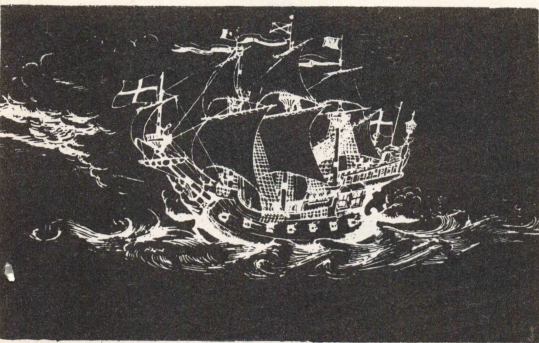
From El Rosario north to San Simon the Mexican government constructed a good gravel road but failed to provide the funds to maintain it. As a result the road washed out in numerous locations, and now there are more detours than original road. Between San Simon and Camalu, the road has a surface like a washboard but speeds up to 35 mph may be attained. The last 20 miles of dirt road is good and the pavement begins at Arroyo Seco. From here it is 93 miles north to the border at Tijuana.

At home an inspection of my weapons carrier revealed numerous loose bolts and a broken "U" bolt. We had no automotive trouble, but it would be advisable for the Baja traveler to carry plenty of extra gas, water, parts and tools. A simple ten cent part may cost much more if you have to spend a week's time traveling to get it.

If you are a "one day" four wheeler who likes to go out and run up and down a few sand dunes, then return to the warm comforts of home, then Baja is *not* for you. Anyone contemplating a trip to Baja California should have his vehicle in top mechanical condition, but most important, is the person himself. He must be an adventurer, a mechanic, an outdoorsman, and an ambassador. He must know his equipment well, be resourceful, willing to give a helping hand, and quick with a smile.



# GRAVEYARD



sheer cliff, with the beach directly below, turned out to be almost a mile of cup up badlands blocking any possible view of the shore.

When we were about to give up in disgust, tire tracks were discovered leading down through a canyon that appeared to be wide enough, with a squeeze, for the Jeep. We decided if some kind of wheeled outfit could make it down this canyon we could. However, taking no chances, Spence went sliding down for a better look. Returning, he said with some reservation, that he thought we could make it down through the narrow gap but he wasn't so sure about the trip back up.

Down the canyon we went, making tight hairpin curves sometimes so narrow you could almost reach out and touch the walls. The trail widened and then we were stopped as suddenly as we started by a massive pile of heavy cobblestones, scooped up there by what must have been an energetic tide. This was the end of the trail. Piling out of the Jeep we scrambled up over the cobblestone wall and gazed in amazement at the sight before us.

We had made it to the graveyard of ships! Scattered along the beach were piles of timbers, driftwood, bottles and junk that would send any beachcomber into seizures.

The debris was scattered along the shore as far as the eye could see. Impossible to see all of it, we searched for pieces of wooden ships and other interesting artifacts of the sea. We discovered ancient boards that were fitted together with wooden pegs and many sea-worn pieces that were obviously from old wrecked ships.

Knowing we couldn't begin to take back all the material we wanted, we limited ourselves to a few precious pieces of driftwood and an old glass bottle or two and some interesting worn rocks.

We soon figured out what had made the tire tracks in the canyon. This was

rich pickings for the hard to find firewood and some Mexican had pulled a cart down to the beach for a load of wood. We discovered rock hard mahogany timbers that he had tried in vain to cut.

Relieved in knowing we didn't depend now on a minus tide for our exit we wandered leisurely along the shore, photographing some of the interesting finds and picking up a few unusual sea shells. However, it had been a rough day and we were soon worn out from trying to see all there was along the beach.

The Jeep made the climb out of the steep canyon and we headed a few miles south to the fishing village of Colnett.

The village consisted of a few small houses and a couple of broken down automobiles. From the looks of their fishing boats and gear these people were divers. We saw a crude gasoline air compressor and the garden hoses they used for their air while diving in the bay.



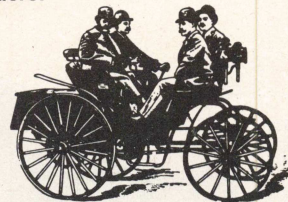
Inquiring about the cove we had just visited, we learned that the beach changes with each heavy tide or storm. This accounted for the report of the long pile of timbers. Perhaps they were there to be discovered only once and vanished with the next storm.

We purchased four live lobsters from the villagers and inquired as to the direction and distance back to the highway. While wandering east back towards the gravel highway we saw some true Baja back country. We encountered a nomadic family in a cienega near Cape Colnett who carried all their earthly possessions on their back and herded their pigs as they traveled.

Having a late lunch at the restaurant where we left the car, we pushed on towards Ensenada and arrived back at the trailer in time to see a spectacular sunset over Ensenada Bay that was, along with a lobster dinner, a fitting climax to an eventful excursion along the Baja coast.

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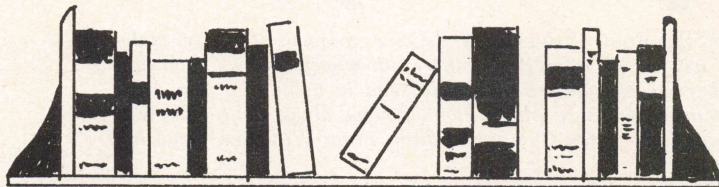
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## Book Review



Book reviews are usually written shortly after a book appears. In the case of *Lower California Guidebook*, there are two excellent reasons for reviewing it in this issue of the FOUR WHEELER.

First, the book was completely revised in 1962 and the maps and landmarks completely brought up to date. This is something that is seldom done with travel books — and even the official maps of Baja are rarely revised. Therefore, the *Lower California Guidebook* is, to my knowledge, the only really current guide to Baja.

Second, since the FOUR WHEELER is featuring Baja in this issue and since so many more four wheelers are planning trips into Baja each year, it seemed appropriate to review a book that gives accurate information about this fascinating country.

To begin with, Gerhard and Gulick are not armchair travelers. They have spent over twenty years exploring Baja California. Readers may be interested to know that after WW II most of their explorations were carried on with fwd equipment. Before that they used pack mules. Like few travel writers before them, Gerhard and Gulick have sensed that the readers of a travel book want only the basic essentials of history, customs, money, health conditions and fundamental information. The first fifty pages are devoted to a condensed resume of these details and is quick, easy reading with excellent accuracy. The facts presented reveal enough information for the casual traveler or for the individual who wants to spend several weeks in Baja.

The sections on immigration, customs regulations, money, etc. have been brought up to date in this new edition so that its timeliness is current.

But the best feature of the *Lower California Guidebook* is its auto trip section. Researching and writing this department must have involved a tremendous amount of time, work and almost fanatical dedication. The result is a blueprint for almost any trip to

Baja.

For example, here is a sample quote from the trip starting at Ensenada to Santa Rosalia. The first mileage listed is the distance from Ensenada; the second mileage is the distance from the last checkpoint.

"351.0 1.1 Branch road left to El Marmolito (3.0 mi.), abandoned onyx quarry. 355.2 4.2 Another side road left to El Marmolito 3.7 mi. 357.6 2.4 Road fork. The right branch goes to the seat at Miller's Landing (4.7 mi., see Page 106.) Keep to the left."

And so on for thousands of entries covering all the main roads and most of the side trails in Baja. For easier reading, the mileages and listings are made in tabular form.

Any experienced Baja traveler can tell you that road maps and guide books can often be wrong in Baja simply because the roads change so often. Yet Gerhard and Gulick have taken even this into account and frequently there is note of variable routes all leading to the same place.

The last section of the book is devoted to areas reached by the sea. While this might not be of basic interest to a four wheeler, it is of passing interest since most of the beaches can be reached by land and many of the islands described can be seen.

While I am always hesitant to recommend a book, I have no qualms about the *Lower California Guidebook*. Generally speaking, its information is excellent. And speaking from broad experience, it is the only current work on Baja that presents enough detailed and technical information to be of real value to the individual planning a trip of any kind to Baja.

For those who might be interested in purchasing the *Lower California Guidebook*, the FOUR WHEELER has made arrangements with the publisher to make it available through the magazine. The price is \$6.50 postpaid. This is a limited offer since both earlier editions were sellouts. Those who are interested should order it soon.

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by  
**Gerhard  
and  
Gulick**

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