

From where I sit ... by Joe Marsh
Harvesting a Better America

Rubbed my eyes yesterday when I saw **Had Jackson's** truck in **Buff Morgan's alfalfa field** ... helping **Buff** get in his setting. Since they've been carrying on a friendly argument for years (over how much fertilizer to use per acre of alfalfa), I had to ask **Had** what was going on.

"Got my own crop in safely last week," he says. "And since **Buff's** boy is at the summer encampment of the National Guard, I figured the least I could do was to help him out. After all, **Had** went on, "there's no argument

over how important the National Guard is to all of us."

From where I sit, a fellow like me, who's too old to get in the Guard, can still vote, do a turn at jury duty, and respect others' rights. Even a little thing like respecting a neighbor's right to have, say, beet or buttermilk at dinner is important if we want to keep America strong. We have to be "guard" in more ways than one these days!

Joe Marsh

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NATURE NOW
Garden of the Gods Presents Many Faces

By **LYDIA KING FREHSE**
 Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

We had come three-fourths of our way across the American continent. As the speedometer ticked off the miles we saw the rolling hills, great central plains, sage brush and desert unfold like a swift-flowing panorama which brought us at last to the lofty mountain ranges.

Upon the gigantic washboard of their ridges and valleys lies the great Continental Divide which separates the nation into an "east" and a "west." And so we came to Colorado Springs, which is very much "West."

It nestles snugly in the valley of its own set of giant peaks. We arrived unnoticed on the week with its accompanying cluster of cowboys and cowgirls, ponies and chuck wagons and swarming tourists who come like bees converging on some hidden meadow.

Twilight had fallen and the sylvan of a new moon hung in the sky before we reached the gateway to the Garden of the Gods. To stand so in the shadow of the

tall perpendicular rocks which guard its entrance was a life-long dream come true.

"SEE THE GARDEN in the moonlight," say the friendly town-folks, thus avowing their belief that in that unearthly quality with which pale moonlight can endow a waiting landscape.

On such a night the red sandstone rocks look black and the twisted junipers strain like ghosts in the direction of the prevailing winds. The swallows have gone to their nests and the magpies are still.

We followed the road that circles the Garden. At such an hour we were alone, seeing the lights and shadows cast by the fantastic rock-shapes that cover its floor.

BUT AS WE approached the gateway from within, we were greeted by the laughter and din of many voices. The usual thrice-weekly "chuck wagon dinner" was gaining momentum. It is served by reservation only from an authentic chuck wagon to all who care to turn back the clock to the days of dinner on the open range.

The last of the beans and steak vanished, a bright camp-fire lighted the rocky walls of the natural amphitheater and the cowboys were tuning up their guitars.

The old songs of the range were soon taken up by the jolly crowd gathered here for a brief respite from their work-a-day world.

They come from far and near and respond proudly as the rollicking cowboy who is acting as master of ceremonies. The excitement is contagious and mounts as a mock branding is carried out at the expense of a greenhorn from "back East."

IT IS THE genius of the American that he can respond with equal fervor to a sacred and simple service which is held at daybreak each Easter morning within these same rocky walls—and he is not the first to come here to worship.

Long before Columbus discovered America, a race of ancient cliff-dwellers came down from the hills and trekked across the plains to meet their "Manitou" beneath the spires and minarets of this same natural cathedral.

The timbers which roof the ruins of their dwellings, built within the protection of the overhanging cliffs in nearby Phantom Cliff canyon, have been identified as belonging to a variety of cedar that flourished there some 1,200 years ago.

THE GROTESQUE shapes and varied colors of the rock formation

are disposed over the rolling plain as if scattered there at random by a mighty hand.

In mountain locations plant and animal life is zoned according to elevation, each division having its characteristic flora and fauna.

The garden lies within the upper Sonoran zone which has an altitude of 5,000 to 6,000 feet. Its plants and animals are hardy and puny. The soil is dry and unyielding but many flowers and shrubs have adapted themselves to its harsh demands.

THEIR FOLIAGE is often restricted and grayed to preserve the necessary moisture.

One of the most beautiful flowers of this region is the sky rocket geranium which blooms tall and red along the roadsides. Its small trumpet-shaped flowers with five sharply pointed petals bloom in a tall spike, thereby adding a satisfying color to many a drab landscape.

Another whose grayed foliage is protected by sharp prickles is called the thistle poppy. We saw it first along a roadside in western Nebraska, but it followed us into Colorado to the Wyoming and northward through Garden and Montana.

It blooms in the most arid lands, its white flower-head resembling in size and shape that of our garden oriental poppy. Its common name of "fried eggs" does not do justice to the delicate beauty of the paper-thin petals which surround the central disk and seem too frail to adorn so harsh a plant.

ONE OF THE prettiest flowers of this area is the Rocky Mountain bee plant, a species of clover.

A short distance from the park entrance there was reclining on an old fence a lovely vine of white Rocky Mountain climber which is usually found at higher altitudes. Many of our familiar flowers, pansies, sun flowers and geraniums lend their colors to the landscape.

As we travel the same road we followed by moonlight, we take note of the dwarfed and twisted trees. The air is hot and scented with juniper pine. Several varieties of juniper grow in the Garden, one of these less than 20 feet tall has stood the onslaught of the elements for 1,200 years.

A small scrub oak whose leaves resemble in outline those of our white oak is abundant all over the park.

Sagebrush dominates the arid landscape. It shares the unfriendly soil with rabbit brush, a low-growing shrub, covered with bright yellow flowers which at a distance resemble our goldenrod.

He it said for the botanist that knowing well the flora of any one region he carries with him a key to unlock the treasure store of plants wherever he may roam.

The 370 acres of the Garden are too restricted an area to support the larger mammals. We heard, but did not see, a whistling marmot. A long-eared squirrel and the ever-present chipmunks came to shake our lunch. A bold Rocky Mountain jay flew off with the remains of a sandwich. When we heard the call of a western wood pewee, scoundered so low over the park that we thought we were at home again.

The purple shadows were lengthening and the swallows were dotting swift circles above the towering rocks as we left the Garden. We turned for a last look at the picture which has become a trademark for the region. It looked just like the postcards we had seen over the years with the red rocks of the gateway framing the park Peak standing guard in the distant sky.

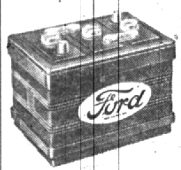
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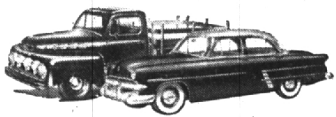
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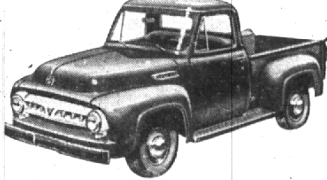
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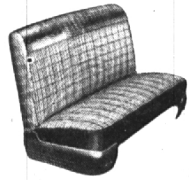
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