

Christmas 1967

Greetings!

This has been an action-packed year alright. It started with work on a six month grant from Wenner-Gren..purpose to ferret out, appraise and record for publication the Museum's huge (and scrambled) collections of Diegueno Indian material culture items. Bill Allan rescued me from the baskets and I took care of the pots, wood, etc., etc., including some 60 year-old song recordings, rescued from the dust bin. Got to know some Diegueno, went into the hills with old Mrs. La Chappa to help yank up rush and grass for baskets...even learned to pound up her acorns for her, with an 18 pound pestle used in a bedrock mortar, that beats Vic Tanney's all hollow for exercise.

Took several field trips into Baja, California, to bargain and photograph and generally get the feel...including the topography, climate, beasts and weeds, springs, soils and all the birds-and-bees stuff an anthropologist has to learn. Fun. Got down into Seri wilds of Sonora with Roger Owen and a Family Wagon stuffed with old clothes. You have never been mobbed until you've been yanked and plucked by Seri women trying to finance a blue wool skirt with six strings of shell beads. Those people are WILD and I want to get back. The picture of Ralph Michelsen, standing on the wagon's tail gate, praising the quality of our wares to milling Seri will long be vivid...it was like stepping back through the Little Green Door and assisting a frontier trader hawk guns to the Sioux. The Seri live under brush ramadas, eating watermelon and semi-raw turtle with a good peppering of sand. They make fine baskets, have recently taken up wood-carving of dolphins, etc., and some of the men still wear their hair long. This, in combination with a red sarong (used to be a pelican-skin wrap-around) and TRULY Hollywood sun-glasses makes you a believer in the facts of acculturation. A bicycle sometimes adds a finishing touch.

A few publications have gotten cranked out, by grim determination, during the flood of busy-work which I guess is the stock-in-trade of all museums...dumb little people with hollow stones asking, "How old is it?" or pot-hunters with beautiful specimens who, on being lectured upon the iniquity of their nefarious hobby, say, "Well, Maw, must be pretty good...better go back and scratch around some more." What can you do?

The museum, the potentials and the people are just great. This is the best and most congenial job I ever had. Have made a number of new friends, learned a fair amount, including how to organize other people...even myself once in a while.

Sold the Brentwood house with regrets (but without trouble) and bought a three-bedroom wickiup on Point Loma. It's great if you don't mind growing fog-begotten mold on your shoes all summer; but accessibility to the warm and wonderful Pacific breakers is immediate and it has been twenty years since I got in so much week-end body surfing. I love it with a passion. Even took six hysterical hours in a SCUBA class. After floating ignominiously, (arse-first but preceded by my tanks) to the surface, I flunked out of the submerged gear-removing routine and decided snorkeling was the thing for Davis. It's a new and beautiful world of the sea.

Right now, we have night-lines out for a couple more grants, great plans for the future, and I'm about to give birth to the last Panamint monograph. One is already in the hopper for printing.

Love and luck and all the best,

Dovey

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Emma Lou Davis

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