

Monument Road

Jean Navarro

The peaceful atmosphere along Monument Road is astounding. Only fifteen or twenty minutes from Downtown, a ride along southernmost San Diego's Monument Road is like flipping through a book of Dorothea Lange photographs. A run-down ramshackle wreck of a stucco house with an abandoned stove on the front porch. A fifty-year old wooden farm house with two acacia shade trees in the front yard and a scarecrow in the adjacent field of lettuce and string beans. A couple of house trailers nestled in a group of avocado trees. An abandoned vegetable stand. All of this under the shade of the Tijuana plateau.

The road meanders through a checkerboard of flat farmland devoted to vegetables and dairy cows and patches of the natural Tia Juana riverbed, covered with sage, wild tobacco, buckwheat, and tumbleweeds. On one of the mailboxes in front of one of the farmhouses is painted "S. Moromoto".

There isn't very much traffic in the daytime on two-lane Monument Road, even on a Sunday when the roads in North County and most other rustic areas around San Diego are jammed with Sunday drivers. An occasional Navy couple who have bicycled down from Nestor on 19th Street or down from Imperial Beach on Hollister Avenue. A family of hors-back riders who are walking their horses up from Trails End, a nearby stable which rents out "Gentle Horses". A pair of Border guards parked in one of the pull-out areas.

The road runs west from Dairy Mart Road near the San Ysidro Border Crossing a full five miles to the recently opened Border Park. At the Border Park entrance, the road forks: one prong, unpaved, heads straight for the beach and really is fit only for horses. The other prong, paved, climbs up to the seaside cliff where one can visit the Border Monument. Overshadowed by Tijuana's Bulling-by-the-Sea, the stark, 10-foot obelisk only has large letters on it which spell out the penalty for defacing it. A small plaque next to the obelisk says the monument was built as a symbol of the friendship between the Mexican and American peoples. In light of the Border situation here, this could only be comic irony.

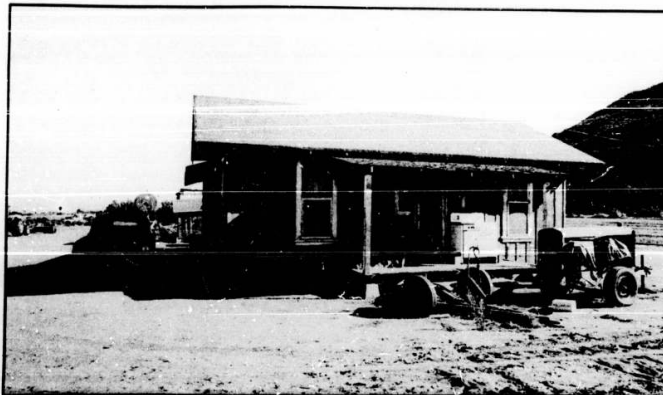


Photo by Jean Navarro



Twenty feet from the monument, two Border guards stand next to their patrol cars, one of which is a sort of paddy wagon with a thin Mexican locked in, looking out. The Mexican wears a gold wedding band.

"We caught him walking too far up the beach. Border Park is open to 'them,' but we have to see that they don't go too far north. We catch 50 or 60 of 'em every night from here to 5 miles the other side of San Ysidro but that's only two per cent. There's 3000 of 'em that make it across every night. And now's not half as bad as January. They all go home for Christmas, you see, and then they come back. No, no, we don't have to shoot. They're used to the Federales. They stop right away. Those Federales, they shoot if you run, no questions asked."

"Yeah, there's all kinds. Not just Mexicans, you see. There's El Salvadorians, British Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Chileans. Used to be a lot more Chileans. Hm-m. Haven't got me a Chilean in quite a while. Not too many Chileans these days. Not since Allende. I guess the military down there must be doing their business."

"Course, when they do catch 'em up in L.A. or San Diego—ever been up at Bonita?—they catch a lot of 'em there—they don't do anything. There's supposed to be some law against employing setbacks, but Congress is controlled by big business, and big business has an interest in that cheap labor. Look at that Mrs. Banzuelo, the Secretary of the Treasury. She made her millions, all right. But it was by employing wets. She paid 'em 50 cents or \$1 an hour. How could anyone compete with her if they have to pay \$2 an hour?"

Asked if a Gringo can cross to the other side by walking south on the beach, the guard replies, "No, it's illegal. It's a \$500 fine and six months in jail if you do. We used to have signs up here saying that, but they'd get torn down as soon as they'd go up."

The Guard partner who isn't doing the talking has been scanning the beach and starts to interrupt the conversation. He points to a group of three Latinos walking north on the beach. "Well, what d'ya think? Shall we go get 'em?"

"Yeah, I guess we can give him the points to the Mexican in the

paddy wagon) to Jack (he points to a San Diego Police car in the parking lot)." As soon as the Border guards start to drive over to the parking lot, the crowd of Latinos on the Mexican side of the fence near the Monument—women, children, teenagers, old men, young men—all stand up and follow the Guards with their eyes. A few teenagers duck under the barbed wire and cross over. A middle aged couple, well dressed, stroll over non-chalantly. A couple of Latinos pass from the American side to the Mexican side. No one seems to take the border seriously.

The guard said that one easy way to tell there was heavy evening illegal border crossing was to go over to the just-plowed field next to the cabbage field on Tijuana Road near Dairy Mart Road. Sure enough, anyone can see it. Thousands of footprints pointed north, freshly imprinted on the freshly plowed dirt. Only 100 yards from the elaborate border crossing at San Ysidro. The footprints, combined with the frustration of the guards and brazen disregard for the Border along Monument Road, gives the whole area down here an aura of Catch 22 absurdity.



Events

December 5-11

MUSIC

LA JOLLA SINFONIA conducted by John Garvey, with violinist Zina Schiff as featured soloist. Music by Christian Lindberg, Ernest Chausson, Prokofiev, Samuel Barber, and Franz Schreker. Sorcelles Theatre, Broadway and 2nd, Downtown San Diego (1000 nonreserved seats available). Saturday, December 7, 8:30 p.m.

LA JOLLA CIVIC University Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, featuring 15-year old pianist Michiko Bishop. Bach's Piano Concerto in D Minor, Handel's *Derrieger*, *Te Deum* and Christmas carols. Saturday, December 7, 8 p.m. Rowella Cafeteria, UCSD, Sunday, December 8, 8 p.m. Sherwood Hall, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. 459-4421 or 452-4090.

MUSIC FOR KIDS by folk singer Stan Wilson. S.D. City College Theatre, Saturday, December 7, 10:30 a.m. Free. 238-1181, ext. 230.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH, performed by the 400-voice San Diego State chorus, the university symphony orchestra, student soloists and choirs from Point Loma and Granite Hills high schools. Sunday, December 8, 3 and 8 p.m. Peterson Gym, S.D.S.U. 286-2204.

ADVENT CONCERT, with choir and soloists. *Messe de Minuit pour Noël* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, St. Andrew-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Sunday, December 8, 7 p.m. 272-0313 or 713-3222.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA, *Hodie* by Vaughan Williams. First Methodist Church, Mission Valley, Sunday, December 8, 8 p.m. 295-2885.

MINI CONCERT. Jack Loken and the La Jolla Brass Quartet. City Theatre, Grand Salon, Monday, December 9, 12 noon. Free. 459-5678.

FLUTIST JANE STRAIT, bassoonist John Ottiano, and harpist Joy Husek play at Scripps Cottage, San Diego State. Monday, December 9, 12 noon and 12:30 p.m.

COUNT BASIE and his orchestra. Mission Bay High School, 2475 Grand Avenue, Monday, December 9, 8 p.m. 770-0372.

COLDBERG VARIATIONS by J.S. Bach, performed by pianist Maral Long. On the harpsichord at 9 p.m., and on the piano at 8 p.m., Friday, December 6, Room 8210, Mandeville Center, UCSD.

MUSIC FOR THE BASS VIOLIN, including composition for double bass quartet, two electric pianos and tree by UCSD grad student Mel Gravel and a new percussion composition by Tuzetky. Also works by Bach and Renaissance madrigals and canzonets. Room 8210, Mandeville Center, UCSD, Thursday, December 5, 12 noon.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR, San Diego Opera presents Donizetti's tragic opera (in Italian) featuring Joa Sutherland. Civic Theatre, Friday, December 6, 8 p.m., and Sunday, December 8, 2:30 p.m. 236-8510.

SPECIAL EVENTS

2ND ANNUAL DANCE CONCERT, jazz, rock, soul, and modern dance. Student Center, Grossmont College, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, December 5 through 7, 8 p.m. 466-1700, ext. 201.

CHRISTMAS IN SPAIN. Reyna's Spanish Ballet with singers, guitarist and dancers. The Mercado, Rancho Bernardo. Saturday, December 7, 12 noon to 8 p.m. Free.

CHRISTMAS ANTIQUE AND COLLECTOR'S SHOW, fourth annual. Scottish Rite Masonic Temple, Mission Valley, Friday and Saturday, December 6 and 7, 1 to 10 p.m., and Sunday, December 8, 12 noon to 8 p.m. 297-0446.

SMALL BUSINESS FRANCHISES, workshop. La Jolla College, Room A-213, Saturday, December 7, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. 279-2300 ext. 270 or 238-1181, ext. 224.

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, a holiday puppet show presented by Marie Hitchcock. Balboa Park Puppet Theatre, Sunday, December 8, 1, 2, and 3 p.m. Also December 15 and 22.

LA JOLLA CHRISTMAS PARADE, 25th annual. Down Grand Avenue, Sunday, December 7, 1:30 p.m. 454-1444.

A CHRISTMAS POSADA, traditional Mexican pageant with carols and dancing. Camino Patio, University of San Diego, Tuesday, December 10, 7:30 p.m. 251-6850, ext. 354.

READER

FILM

SALT WATER WINE, a new surfing film by Alan Rich. Thursday, December 5, 8 p.m., Collier Jr. High, Ocean Beach; Friday and Saturday, December 6 and 7, 8 p.m., Pacific Beach Jr. High; Sunday, December 8, 7:30 p.m., Coronado High.

THE MAGICIAN, Campus Activities Board film. Backdoor, Aztec Center, San Diego State, Thursday, December 5, 7 and 9 p.m. 286-8562.

POPEYE FOLLIES: HIS TIMES AND LIFE. Evolution of Music in America series. Fine Arts Recital Hall, Grossmont College, Friday, December 6, 8 p.m. Free. 465-1700, ext. 321.

BOHN FHEE, the Academy Award winning film. Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, Saturday and Sunday, December 7 and 8, 1:30 and 3 p.m. 232-3821, ext. 32.

ISLANDS OF THE GREAT LAKES, part of See the Americas First series. S.D. City College Theatre, Sunday, December 8, 2 p.m. Free.

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL, children's film and puppet show. Sherwood Hall, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, Sunday, December 7, 2:30 p.m. Free. 454-0183.

PYGMIES, Jean-Pierre Hallet's film. Casa del Prado Auditorium, Balboa Park, Saturday and Sunday, December 7 and 8, 3 and 8 p.m.

MARPLE SUGAR FARMER, shows traditional method of making maple syrup and sugar. S.D. City Library, 3rd floor lecture room. Tuesday, December 10, 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. Free.

IGMENE CUNNINGHAM, PHOTOGRAPHER: WHAT DID YOU THINK OF MILLIE FORD AND FRANKENSTEIN IN A FISH BOWL, first in a series of film-forums. Fine Arts Recital Hall, Grossmont College, Wednesday, December 11, 8 p.m. Free. 465-1700, ext. 321.

LECTURES & READINGS

ISRAEL, THE U.S., AND THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE, by Moshe Liss. Milliken Forum, 4635 El Cajon Blvd., Friday, December 6, 8 p.m. 291-6490, ext. 354.

A NIGHT IN ROD STERLING'S GALLERY. Playright and T.V. host with film clips and quips. U.S.D. Sports Center, Friday, December 6, 8 p.m. 291-6490, ext. 354.

PRISON PSYCHIATRY, discussion by Dr. Lee Coleman. Conclusion of Criminal Justice series. Tuesday, December 10, College Grove Shopping Center Community Hall, 1:30 p.m.; San Rohr Fine Arts Center, 6053 University Ave., 7:30 p.m. Free. 465-1700, ext. 321.

THEATRE

THE MAGIC TOYSHOP, children's play. Actors Quarter Theatre, Saturdays and Sundays, 2 p.m. through December 15, 238-9609.

EVERYBODY'S GIRL, Actors Quarter Theatre, Fridays and Saturdays through December 14, 8:30 p.m. 238-9609.

PLAY OF ROBIN AND MARION, 13th Century French musical theatre (the precursor of opera). With recorders, shawms, bagpipes, krumphorns, dulcimers, and other medieval musical instruments. Presented by the New World Consort at Montezuma Theatre, San Diego State, Friday, December 6, 8 p.m. 286-8947.

MARTHA, Friedrich von Flotow's comic opera. Presented by the Opera Theatre of S.D. State, Recital Hall, San Diego State, Friday and Saturday, December 7 and 8, 8 p.m. (also Friday and Saturday, December 14 and 15, 8 p.m. and 5 p.m., respectively). 286-8204.

UNASSASSILABLE EVIDENCE, by John Gaboris. Moss College Room A-213, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, December 5 through 7, 8 p.m. Also December 13 and 14, 279-2300.

ONE ACT PLAYS. Experimental Theatre, San Diego State. Friday and Saturday, December 6 and 7, 8 p.m.

A TOUCH OF CHRISTMAS, Christmas vignettes presented by school children from USD's Department of Special Education. Camino Theatre, U.S.D. Sunday, December 8, 3 p.m. 291-6480.

ANCIENT MUSIC, by Rosie Driffield. Crystal Palace Theatre, Mission Beach. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through January 5, 9:30 p.m. 496-8901.

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SCHOOL FOR WIVES, by Muller e. Casius Carter Centre Stage, Balboa Park. Tuesdays through Sundays. Through December 8, 8 p.m. 238-2255.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS, a mystery by J.P. Priestly, Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. Through December 22, 238-2255.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

JAYE LAWRENCE, Fiber Sculpture. Triel Gallery, 3701 India Street. December 6 through December 29, 299-6543.

INDIANS OF MEXICO, Museum of Man's new main exhibit featuring "Peyote Pilgrims". Balboa Park. Opens Saturday, December 7, 2:30-3:30 p.m., ext. 32.

WATERCOLORS OF California Wildflowers by Albert Valentien. Natural History Museum, Balboa Park. Opens Saturday, December 7, 2:30-3:30 p.m., ext. 32.

LARRY ORTIZ, Acrylics. Jupiter Records, 5616 Balboa, Clairemont. Thursday, December 5, through Thursday, December 12, 278-3251.

LAS TRES MUJERES, Volinda Lopez, Gloria Amalia Flores, and Victoria del Castillo. Galeria Postera, 2136 Logan Avenue. Through December 9, 233-9445.

S.D. CITY LIBRARY, "Salute to San Diego Authors of 1974". Lobby, begins Monday, December 5. "Beautiful Bindings Make Books Special", "Waggonwheel Room", "Japanese Christmas Cards" California Room. Through December 29.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS, Library, Grossmont College. Through December 23, 466-1700, ext. 321.

BLUEPRINTS, DRAWINGS, CRAFTS and SCULPTURE, three one-man shows. Art Gallery, Southwestern College, Through December 13, 420-1330.

PIONEER PRINTMAKERS, Works by Jack Zamec, Nathan Oliveira, and Garner Tull. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. Through December 15, 232-7621.

FUN CITY, lithograph by Richard Lindner. Concurrent Exhibit by Robin Bright, Fayla Friedman, and R. Shaw. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. Through January 5, 454-0183.

LENORE SIMON, SUSAN SIMMEN, and GAYE GOODMAN, Limited edition graphics and original paintings by 30 local artists. Through December 13, Harlequin Gallery, La Jolla. 468-9077.

INDIAN ART OF THE AMERICAS, 500 pieces from the Hye Foundation Museum of the American Indian. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. Through January 26, 232-7621.

LARRY CLARK, San Diego painter. Humble Artist Gallery, La Mesa Square. Through December. 460-4544.

PRINTMAKER Frederick O'Vara. Knowles Art Center, 7420 Girard Ave., La Jolla. Through January 4, 454-8515.

SPORTS

BASKETBALL. Aztec vs. University of Arizona, S.D. Sports Arena, Saturday, December 7, 8 p.m. 286-8947 or 224-1478.

TENNIS TOURNAMENT, Annual Donald Seaman Junior Round Robin. University of San Diego tennis courts. Saturday and Sunday, December 7 and 8, all day. 763-4639.

FOOTBALL. Chargers vs. Chicago Bear's. S.D. Stadium, Sunday, December 8, 1 p.m. 280-2111.

BASKETBALL. Conquistadors vs. San Antonio Spurs. S.D. Sports Arena, Sunday, December 8, 7 p.m. 224-1478.

BASKETBALL. Aztec vs. Purdue. S.D. Sports Arena, Monday, December 9, 8 p.m. 286-8947.

HOCKEY. Mariners vs. Michigan State. S.D. Sports Arena, Tuesday, December 10, 7:30 p.m. 224-1478.

READER

What's a Nice Catholic Housewife Like You...?



—Jonathan Saville—

6 Mrs Riv Vu, at the Coronado Playhouse, is an unpretentious little comedy about "a charming pair of strangers of opposite sex who get locked in while inspecting New York's last available rent-controlled apartment." Sounds pretty trivial—and certainly playwright Bob Randall, whose education in drama seems to have come mainly from watching television shows, is not about to displace Aeschylus. He is more an offshoot of the school of Neil Simon: contemporary middle class setting, New York "in" jokes, a race of muddled semi-victims undergoing mild family problems in apartments where the plumbing doesn't work. The disciple is a bit more human than the master, however; the pathos of Randall's characters, stuck in a way of life that allows no room for heroism, magnanimity, passion or grace, is not totally obscured with computerized one-line gags, as it tends to be in Simon's plays.

In the present case, the pathos lies in the fact that both the "strangers of opposite sex" are married to exceedingly unimaginative persons whom they regard as restrictive parents and who regard them as wayward children. Paul Friedman is sensitive, whimsical, artistic, weak, a Jewish sufferer; his wife Janet is competent, responsible, kindly, patient, a

Jewish boss. Anne Miller, Paul's apartment-mate for a few hectic afternoon hours and one feebly torrid night, is sensitive, whimsical, artistic, weak, a Catholic sufferer; her husband Richard is competent, responsible, kindly, patient, a WASP boss. When the two sufferers get together, they are like a pair of five-year-old twins, playing games in an empty house, having a secret picnic on the floor, defying propriety, neatness, mams and papa. But as soon as their affair begins to get serious, they rush home to the parental hearth, making sounds of poignant loss and hard-won maturity. How, after all, could a man and woman form a lasting relationship when they have exactly the same sense of humor, are congenial self-doubters of exactly the same sort, and share exactly the same taste in Chinese food? It would be like being married to yourself. So irresponsible narcissism is defeated and dull adulthood takes its place; there is no third way—at least in the emotionally restricted vision of life Bob Randall presents us with.

This is essentially a two-person show, and the production in Coronado is sustained almost exclusively by the exceptional acting talents of Jennifer Henn and Michael Niederman. I have admired Miss Henn in a number of other San Diego productions, including the elegant *Private Lives* at the Carter last summer. It is a tribute to her skill that in *6 Mrs Riv Vu* she manages to suppress a large amount of that natural aristocracy of presence

that so contributed to the elegance of Noel Coward's sweet-and-sour comedy of high life. Here we are plunged into what might be referred to as "middle" life, and what is called for is exactly what Miss Henn gives us: a young woman who might have been a swinging, cocktail-imbibing advertising executive, but who has chosen to be a mother, housewife, and laundry-folder, and has consequently done her level best to take all elegance, swing or sophistication out of her clothes, her voice, her gestures, and even her walk. Anne's moment of abandon during the kindergarten picnic on the rug, gives Miss Henn the chance to show off her striking beauty, but she constrains it out of her clothes, her voice, her gestures, and even her walk. Anne's moment of abandon during the kindergarten picnic on the rug, gives Miss Henn the chance to show off her striking beauty, but she constrains it out of her clothes, her voice, her gestures, and even her walk. Anne's moment of abandon during the kindergarten picnic on the rug, gives Miss Henn the chance to show off her striking beauty, but she constrains it out of her clothes, her voice, her gestures, and even her walk.

New York elements in the accent were themselves misused. A Barnard graduate like Anne would never flatten her *a's* the way Miss Henn did; when she spoke of "Janet" she sounded more like a salesgirl at Macy's than like the college educated wife of a sought-after architect. Frankly, I don't think any actor—even someone as talented as Miss Henn—ought to touch a specialized accent unless there is an authentic expert around to provide coaching. There were evidently no authentic experts at her disposal in Coronado.

In contrast, Michael Niederman, who plays Paul, makes only the slightest bid in the direction of New Yorkese, and although he does not sound like a New Yorker, he avoids sounding like an actor trying to sound like a New Yorker—and that seems quite good enough. As an actor, Mr. Niederman is nicely on a par with Miss Henn. He tends to emphasize a bit more than she does. The playful, childlike nature of the character, Paul is, after all, the more infantile of the two, and Mr. Niederman's performance skillfully conveys that fact. But along with the baby-like jokes and playacting demanded by the script, he too succeeds in creating a living character of real tenderness, awkwardness, hopefulness and hopelessness. He does this with an engaging energy that makes both him and his role at once comical, pathetic, and pleasantly attractive, in a slightly collapsed way. If Mr. Niederman were to straighten up his shoulders he might go on to more romantic parts.

When either Miss Henn or Mr. Niederman is speaking, the Coronado production of *6 Mrs Riv Vu* is consistently lively, funny, and moving. When they are silent, however, a pall falls over both the comedy and the touching emotions, as if intermittent disasters were being broadcast on the stage in the midst of all the fun. The best of actors need a director; and although the program credits producer Stanley Martin with the play's direction, I find it hard to perceive what he has done, if anything at all. The problem is apparently the fact that Anne and Paul, meeting under stressful circumstances and being rather inhibited persons to begin with, have to be shown as feeling awkward with each other. What more natural way to show awkwardness than to contrive awkward pauses between their lines? But a good deal of directorial finesse is needed to keep an awkward pause from becoming an embarrassing one. No such finesse is forthcoming, and the result is a dreadful series of liddowns in energy and tension, a continually repeated—and ultimately soporific—cringing of the lively pace on which comedy of this sort depends. Miss Henn and Mr. Niederman seem to be operating in a directorial vacuum, like astroidee falling to each other through the void, and it is a special credit to their acting abilities that they manage to keep the audience alive and laughing even in what might accurately be characterized as interstellar space.

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