FOREWORD

Most people who visit Carlsbad Caverns National Park find it impossible to describe. The trip through the Caverns is a profound emotional experience, and neither words nor photographs can do it justice.

In the following pages are the impressions of Ford Sibley, a Los Angeles writer, after his first trip through the Caverns. We hope you will enjoy reading of his trip and will some day experience Carlsbad Caverns National Park yourself.

The photographs in this booklet are, we believe, the finest ever taken in the Caverns. Though the illumination down there is bright, it is not strong enough for instantaneous photographs. Hence it was necessary to send expert photographers with special lighting equipment. Colonel Thomas Boles, Superintendent of the Park, extended every courtesy and co-operation. Without his help these photographs could never have been taken, and we wish to thank him again for his many kindnesses.

The photographers were Roger Sturtevant, Ansel Adams, Jack Whisler and Mike Roberts.

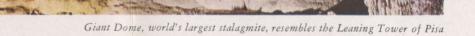
Carlsbad Caverns have come a long way since they were first opened to the public in 1924 and attracted 1,280 visitors. Last year 241,590 people made the tour!

> F. S. MCGINNIS, Vice-President, Southern Pacific Company

QUICKEST WAY TO SEE CARLSBAD CAVERNS

\$975 All-expense

Quickest way to see Carlsbad Caverns on your trip East or West is from El Paso on Southern Pacific's main line. You can arrive on a morning S. P. train, make the complete Cavern tour and continue your trip on another S. P. train that night. Side trip from El Paso to Carlsbad Caverns costs only \$9.75 all-expense.



My trip through CARLSBAD CAVERNS

By FORD SIBLEY

J im White used to be a cowboy and now he's an author. It just goes to show what happens when a man stumbles onto a cave, has courage enough to explore it, finds it to be the largest in the world, and writes about it. Jim no longer brands yearlings or rides fence. He makes his headquarters in Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Far underground in the glistening lunchroom, he presidesover a souvenir counter, autographs his books, and bends his lanky frame across colored postcards and silver knickknacks to shake your hand.

At that he probably got no bigger thrill from seeing Carlsbad Caverns for the first time than I did. When he went down, he did it with a rope, a torch, and a couple of sandwiches. It was blacker than pitch. He couldn't see very far. He probably cracked his shins and bumped his head. And even though he has the honor today of being the first white man to explore Carlsbad Caverns, I think he missed a lot in going down before the Government fixed it up for him.

I walked down there on a solid path at least four feet wide and came back on a high-speed elevator. Powerful floodlights shone all around. I had the competent services of National Park Rangers to lead the way. I saw it all in one afternoon, while Jim White (as all pioneers must) went more slowly. I saw, in one glance, a room big enough to house the Yale Bowl, while Jim, holding aloft his spluttering torch, could barely make out objects a hundred feet away. In short, I think that my first trip, if less adventurous, was far more fun than Jim White's.

Prairie Smoke

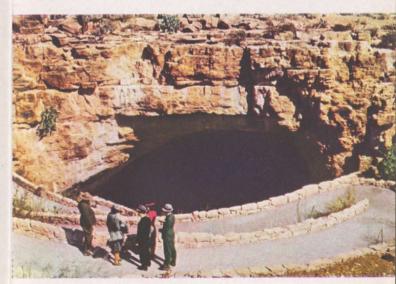
He tells his story directly⁴ and simply. He was in the neighborhood of the Caverns in the year 1901. It was one of those dusky evenings that hang over New Mexico in the early fall, the closest thing they have to an Indian Summer down there, and Jim was going about his business when he noticed suddenly on the horizon what seemed to be a column of smoke pouring from the ground. On closer inspection, he was



This streamlined air-cooled motor coach meets you at the train



.. and speeds you over the fine paved highway to Carlsbad Caverns



A wide, gentle trail leads to the underground fairyland

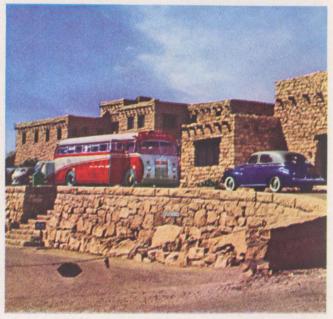
amazed to see that the cloud was composed of bats-thousands of them-rising from a black cave mouth and fluttering off into the gathering darkness.

He watched them for a long time and then returned the next day with a young Mexican helper to begin solitary exploration of the cave; day by day penetrating deeper, leaving behind torch marks and bits of string to lead him back to the surface. Several years later, as word got around, he began to take others with him. The news spread: unbelievable tales of a never-ending chain of caves in the mountains of southern New Mexico. Publicity followed. In 1923 they were made a National Monument and in 1930 a National Park. Today, they tell me that more than 200,000 people a year follow the trail blazed by Jim White and improved upon by the Government.

Incidentally, the same bats that Jim White saw (or rather their offspring) still live in the Caverns. But don't get the idea that you'll see them when you make the trip underground. During the daytime, they cuddle together in an exclusive chamber of their own apart from the main Caverns.

Cool Motor Coach

But to return to my trip again: I found the quickest way to see Carlsbad Caverns on a transcontinental trip was by Southern Pacific train to El Paso and then by motor coach



Neat stone buildings mark the Caverns' entrance

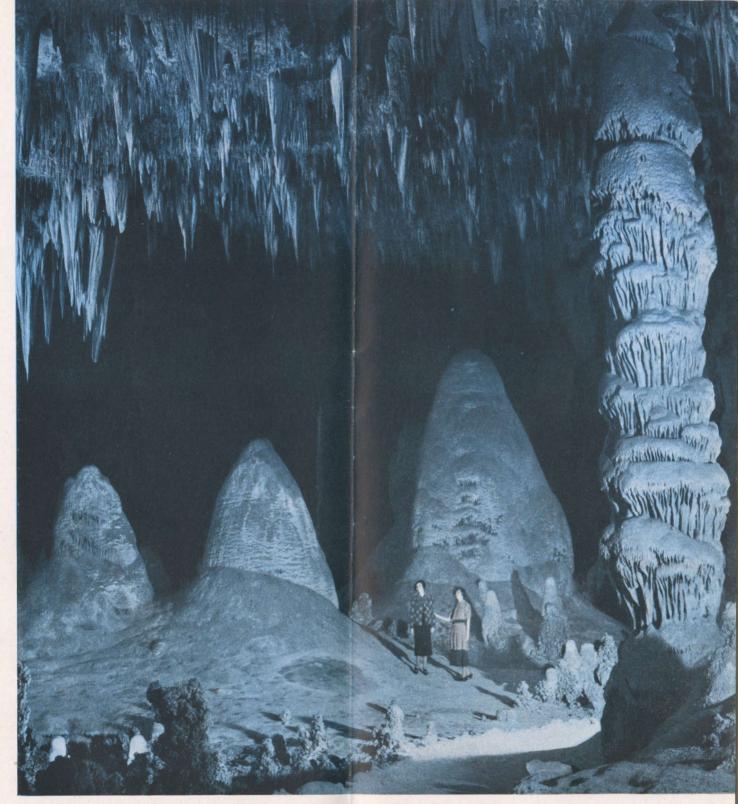
(operated by Carlsbad Cavern Coaches Co.) to the Caverns. Co-ordinated train and motor coach schedules enable you to arrive at El Paso on a morning Southern Pacific train, see the Caverns and continue your trip east or west on another S. P. train that night. The trip from El Paso to the Caverns is made in a streamlined, air-cooled motor coach over paved highway all the way. Luncheon is served on the motor coach en route. And the whole works costs only \$9.75 all-expense, which certainly seems reasonable enough to me.

When you make the trip from El Paso you have plenty of time in the Caverns, I found. You see every room open to the public and make the complete Cavern tour, walking down and returning to the surface by elevator.

Along the way, some 150 miles north and east of El Paso to the Guadalupe Mountains, you'll meet the range country of the Southwest: long drawn-out plains that spread away to distant knobs of hills, hills that fold into one another and through which the road winds and turns, following an occasional dry stream bed or a desolate line of barbed wire. The road, a modern high-speed highway, follows the old Butterfield Trail made by the Forty-niners who traveled through the Southwest on their way to California. Sections of this pathway can be seen here and there as your coach speeds along. Then there are the clusters of white-faced cattle that eye you solemnly and the queer conglomeration of semidesert plants: buffalo grass, sotol, mesquite, sage, Spanish bayonet, and the graceful wands of a hundred kinds of



Stalactites grow from ceiling, stalagmites from floor



The Big Room is well-named. It is 4,000 feet long, 625 feet wide, and in one place arches 350 feet above the Cavern floor!



This "Iceberg" is pure white limestone

yucca. Lonely signs: "Gas and Oil, Cold Drinks," "Stop at White's City." Finally, the coach roars upgrade through a broad canyon, tops a range of small hills, reaches the Government settlement that centers the National Park.

Official Roof

Carlsbad Caverns National Park is 49,960 acres in area, only a small part being the roof of the Caverns. The dozen or so homes and administration buildings are set in a brief arroyo that opens to the west and ends in an abrupt rise to the east. Set into this eastern embankment is the natural opening to the Caverns, a black half-moon about fifty feet high, in front of which flies a clean red, white and blue flag.

The surrounding buildings are of a sturdy sameness, constructed of grey stone and connected one to another by a web of neat gravel walks. All but the elevator building are placed on the north slope of the arroyo. The highway, approaching the settlement, divides; one road climbing to the elevator building on the south crest, the other continuing up the canyon and ending in a parking area just short of the Cavern entrance.

And that's all there is above ground unless you count the surrounding gardens of semi-desert flora, the water-color blue sky, and the whitest, puffiest clouds you've ever laid your eyes on. Except for the automobiles and the blocky houses you could be anywhere in the high mountain country of the Southwest.

You haven't time to see *all* this picture as your motor coach rolls up the main highway and parks in front of the Cavern entrance. You are too busy preparing to leave the car, collecting cameras and wraps, asking questions of the driver, and craning at the black opening not more than 100 yards away. Then you are walking down the gently sloping pathway that zigzags back and forth into the black throat of the Caverns.

Down, Down

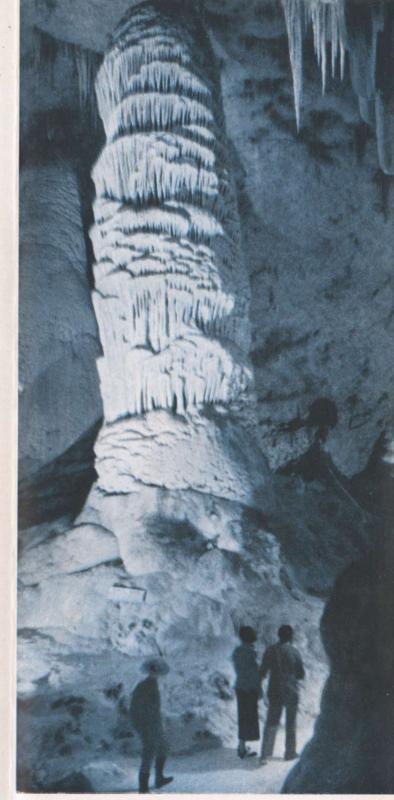
Going underground? You will never know what that means unless you walk the pathway into Carlsbad Caverns. During the motor trip the prospect of touring a chain of caves had appeared novel and interesting, but by no means thrilling or awe-inspiring. It was to be a mild kind of entertainment, I thought, something like "doing" an art museum. In fact, one of the ladies in the party had provided herself with pencil and paper, presumably to record the most interesting or the most novel sights. But when the shadowed entrance of the Caverns closed over us and the lights began to blink on alongside the path and a persistent, cool breeze rolled past us out of the depths, then we knew for the first time what "going underground" meant: adventure in a strange new world. I am sure it was then that the lady with the pencil and paper realized that Carlsbad Caverns was something more than an over-size curio.

It isn't long before daylight fades entirely. As you walk down the path, the overhanging ridge of the entrance gradually cuts off the sky, the opening itself becomes smaller and smaller each time you look back at it, and suddenly a limestone outcropping shuts it out altogether. You are underground then and no mistake about it, with the ceiling far above you and the walls, creased by powerful lights into pillars and columns of yellow and black, looking stern and monumental. Far down and ahead of you the rest of the party moves along two and three abreast, mumbling to one another. (You'll discover that people in a cave do not talk. They mumble. They pitch their voices low as if they were touring a hospital ward or a public library.)

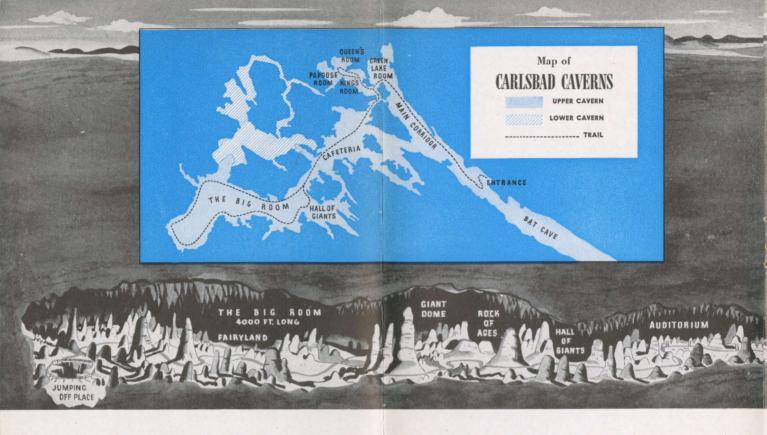
White Kingdom

You pass from the giant entrance chamber, swinging left to enter the Auditorium–a mighty underground cavity whose floor slopes farther down into the Caverns. The pathway continues to turn back and forth, now and again taking to stairways, detouring around mammoth boulders that are goodsized hills in themselves. Overhead, appears an occasional stalactite (your first), shimmering and dancing in the hidden floodlights or in the rays of a Ranger's two-foot flashlight. Always, the pathway is downward. Always, from the end of the line, you can look into the depths and see the line ahead of you: the white frocks of the ladies, the white shirts and panama hats of the men. You can hear their mumbling voices rising in the fifty-six degree coolness to ricochet off the walls and off the ceiling high above your head.

Soon the walls take on a whiter lustre, the chambers grow slightly smaller, stalactites become more frequent. You pass through natural doorways of limestone. Here is a stalagmite (the opposite of stalactite; it grows upward). Here is a whole cluster of cream-colored icicles dripping from a crevice in the wall. Here is a wall that looks as if it were made from freshly-drifted snow. Finally, with the whole world becoming whiter and more fanciful, you round a turn and find yourself 750 feet underground on the edge of a tiny lake not more than ten feet in diameter. It is a deep green in color, marvelously clear, and set in a white alcove of polished rocks and overhead drapes. Floodlights, hidden from the pathway, sparkle on the surface of the water and reflect an emerald



Giant Dome is 62 feet high, 16 feet in diameter



tinge to the surrounding walls. Except for this touch of color, all is white; a pure, frosty white decidedly in keeping with the cool atmosphere.

Royal Rooms

On you go, now in a dazzling white fairyland, winding along firm paths, under symmetrical clusters of stalactites and past long, flowing drapes that reach along the walls from ceiling to floor. Floodlights are now out in the open, raised on iron rods, reflectors turned upward to catch the pure whiteness of overhead limestone. Then past the Frozen Waterfall (foam and water contours caught in midair), under a spangled portiére and into the King's Throne Room. Here, too, the walls, ceiling and floor are as white as vanilla taffy. Delicate curtains sweep along the outer walls. Long needles hang from overhead, many no thicker than your little finger. One, slightly longer than the others, is known as the King's Bellcord. Another, a thick lance, reaches down to within a fraction of an inch of a miniature campanile. Everywhere are small figures curiously chiseled by the action of water on limestone-birds, snakes, guns, swords, ropes-all snow white and finely formed.

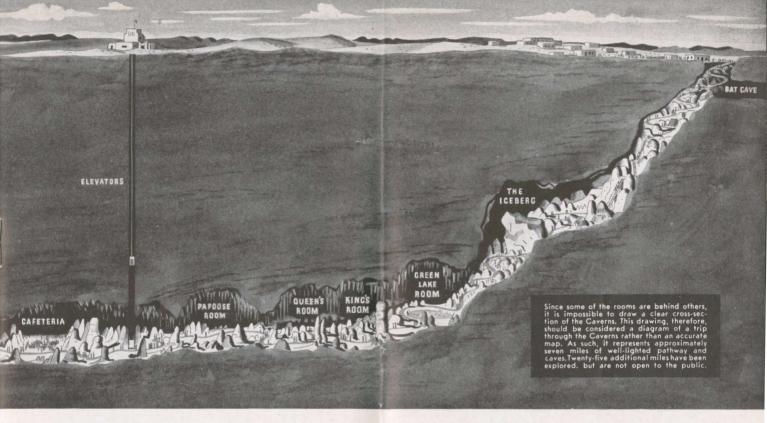
Entering the Queen's Room, another glittering chamber of spires and hangings, I remember our guide pointed to a couple of strange-shaped formations that hung near the entrance. The "King's Boots," he announced. Everyone laughed politely. Encouraged, our guide turned his flashlight into a small alcove. Inside, jutting from a wall, was a replica of a water faucet.

"The Queen's Kitchen," I suggested.

"The Queen's Bathroom," said the guide archly.

Kitchen or bathroom or just an underground chamber the Queen's Room has, I think, the finest and most fragile collection of drapes. They slide downward in graceful scallops, pearly and neat, and no thicker than velvet in places. Many of them are hollow and when rapped lightly give off a beautiful vibrating tone like that of a tuning-fork. The gleam of a flashlight can be seen right through them. Then, too, in the Queen's Room are found exquisitely carved helectites (horizontal formations) spun into beautiful milk-white grape arbors.

Beyond the Queen's Room, another crystal den holds the



strange carvings of the Papoose Room, a miniature Indian village of tiny wigwams and surrounding hills; still more gay clusters of hanging needles and swords, more curtains, and more formations that look like Gay 90 hitching posts.

Through the Papoose Room you go, along a snowy corridor, past a giant rock that has been cut into uniform columns to look like a big pipe organ, and into the world's only underground cafeteria, cheerfully lighted and smelling of coffee and food. It is a big room, possibly two hundred yards long and fifty feet wide, with a scalloped white ceiling that drops to within fifteen feet of the floor. Here you rest for ten minutes and prepare for the wonders ahead.

Big Room

Suddenly there is a stir in the room. The party quickly reforms and files out into the Big Room, that part they call the Hall of Giants.

And so it is — a mighty hall. Overhead, the ceiling is dimly made out three hundred feet away: smooth, grey and orange, slightly vaulted like the nave of a great cathedral. And along the walls are tall statues. Squint at these stalagmites and they take on recognizable shapes. There is a dog of unheard-of size sitting on his haunches. A group of three giants. Could that be the Madonna? And there's a mummy wrapped in stone. And a badly battered knight. Or is it a beggar? Once upon a time, maybe two thousand or two million years ago, the whole ceiling fell in here and spoiled no one knows how many figures in the center of the hall. But these along the walls have survived, hundreds of them, formed by the patient drip of limestone water from the crevices overhead.

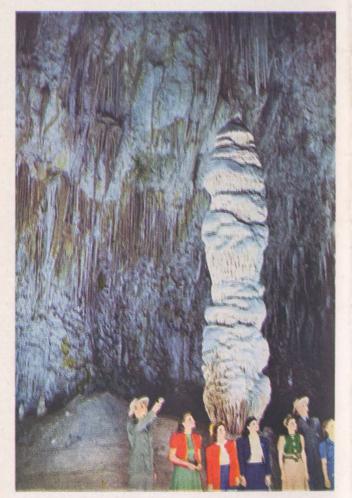
Silently watched by the dogs, giants, and mummies, our line moves onward. Lights flare up everywhere . . . and from nowhere. No lamps are visible. No switches or cord. Just an indirect white light that throws a fantastic glare through this shadowed gallery.

We are now in the Big Room proper. We face a solid towering mass of limestone: the Giant Dome, world's largest stalagmite, 62 feet high, 16 feet in diameter. How old is it? How old do you think it would be, growing an inch every century. As old as the earth itself, sixty million years they estimate. It was middle-aged when you and I were tadpoles.

On and on we walk along the built-up paths, the only

change (excepting the lights) that man has made in the Big Room. These paths are a good five feet wide, carpeted with powdery white limestone and lined with rocks that form a small curbing. To the left suddenly looms a familiar, spindly shaft: a lean totem-pole, hawk-nosed faces and big eyes glaring along its length. Above us at this point, the ceiling rises to a height of 350 feet.

And then comes Fairyland–a part of the Big Room. There are funny toadstools in one place and an occasional gnomelike figure from one to three feet high. The path rises slightly and we pass before an audience of bald-headed men. There must be at least a hundred of them, none over five feet tall, dressed in grey robes, their feet hidden and their heads glistening like white marble. A hidden floodlight touches this assemblage, carving their faces into queer expressions and furrowing their togas. Some argue among themselves. Others watch us. As we move along, the lights catch new



The rangers say this stalagmite looks like Santa Claus

angles, their faces change, their garments ripple, some are suddenly lost to sight and others pop up to take their places. It's not hard to forget that our audience is just a group of fair-sized stalagmites, especially as the constant rumble of the touring party echoes among them and they seem to growl at *us*.

Lower Caverns

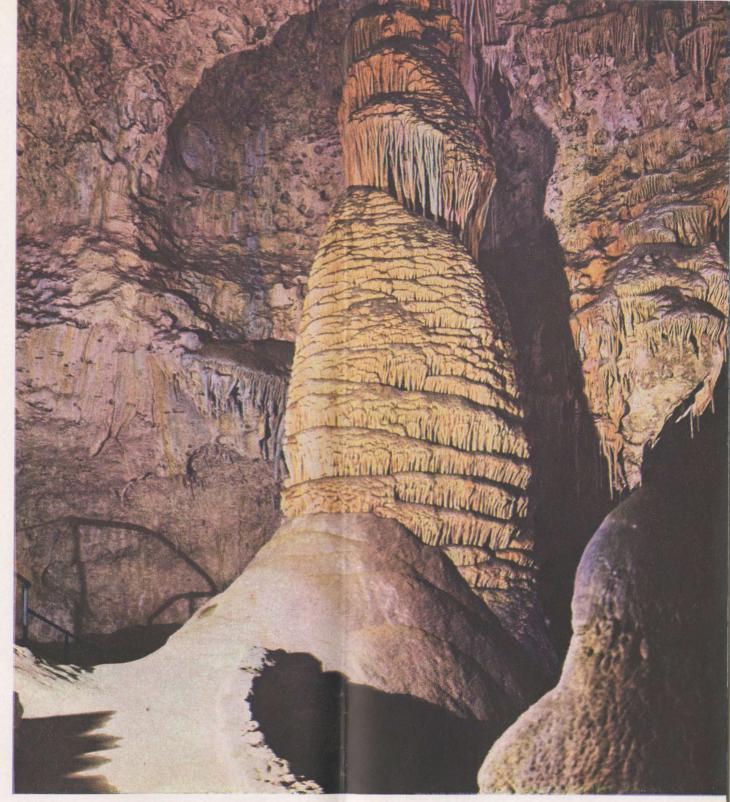
"Down there," says the Ranger, pointing his flashlight over a railing, "is the lower cavern."

You look over the rail into a gloomy stillness 150 feet below and barely make out other figures, other little men and totem poles and toadstools just as fantastic as the ones you've seen, but very lonely down there in the dark. Some day, you are told, the Government will build paths down there too, and then more than a thousand visitors a day will parade before the gnomes and little people of the lower cave.

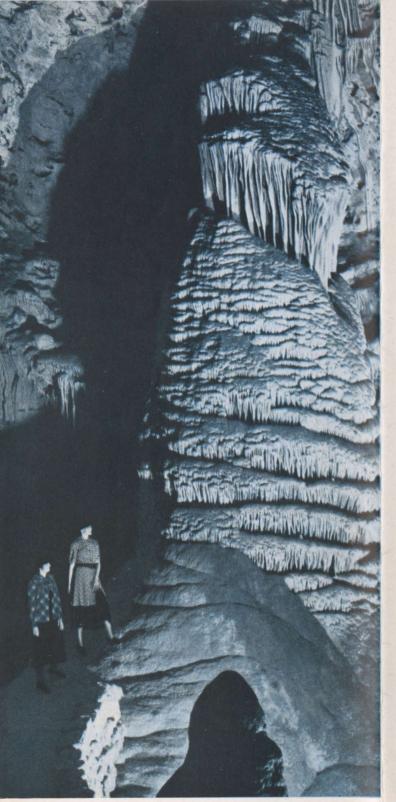
Around the far end of the Big Room, the line halts momentarily to admire a long shapely lance that sweeps down from the walls or to gape at a field of mammoth lily pads or at a formation that seems to roll out of the sidewall like a frozen cascade of water. But you can't stop for long. The Rangers keep the party at a steady pace. They ask you not to take pictures because the time required to make a decent exposure would hold up the party. A lot of people, including myself, took snapshots and got something that looked like the inside of a rain barrel. The only good photographs that have ever come out of the Caverns were made by professionals who, with permission of Superintendent Boles, enter with fancy cameras and lights and take time exposures. (An example are the photographs in this booklet, some of the finest ever taken in Carlsbad Caverns National Park.)

Lights Out

Just once are the lights turned out during the tour of the Caverns. After making the circuit of the Big Room—a matter of two miles or so—we stopped in a kind of natural amphitheatre facing a huge stalagmite—the Rock of Ages, said to be the oldest in the world. And well it might be. Perched on a slight rise against one of the Big Room walls, wrinkled, faintly tinted with orange, and sparkling in the rays of floodlights, it looks as tall as a house and almost as wide. The semicircular hill that faces it is terraced by the path and, as our party paused along the slope, we were asked to sit down facing the Rock of Ages.



This is the massive Rock of Ages. Nature was working on it when you and I were tadpoles



Another view of the Rock of Ages

This we did. Several hurriedly put out cigarettes. Children were shushed right and left. Whispers stopped. Someone coughed — a sound that rocketed through the Big Room like a rifle shot. And then, with everyone as quiet as the Rock itself, Colonel Thomas Boles, genial Superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, made a speech. After remarking on the size of the party and thanking us all for coming, he went on to say that when the lights went out we would be in total and complete darkness for the first time in our lives.

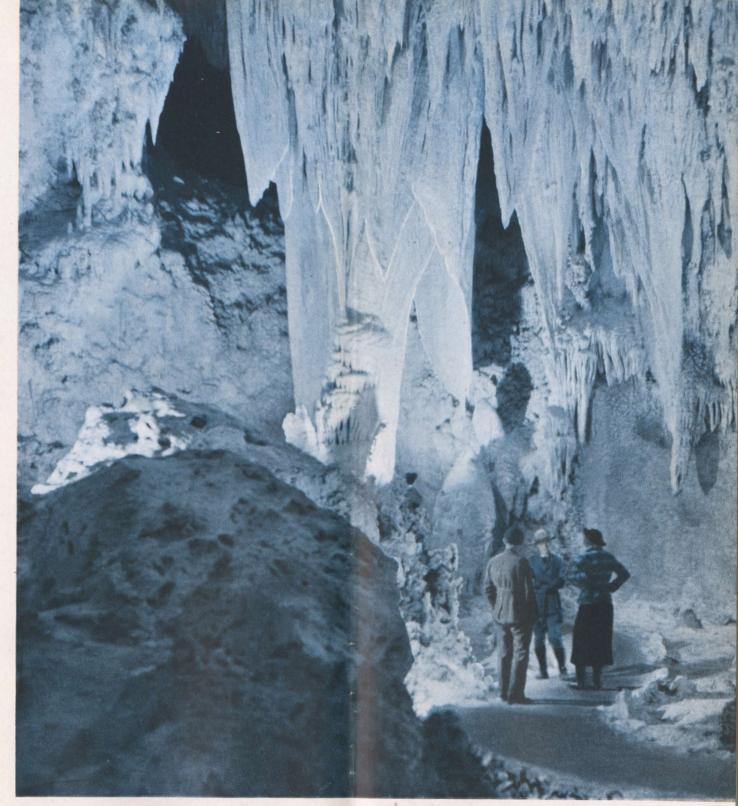
In the immense silence that settled down again, I could hear from some remote corner the steady drip-drip-drip of limestone water as it whacked the top of a growing stalagmite. Then the lights dimmed very, very slowly and went out. For as long as it takes to read these words, an afterglow hung on the Cavern walls and then a solid blackness covered everything. I peered around and waved my hand before my eyes. There was no sensation of sight at all. I was alone, underground, and totally blind.

For several minutes it seemed (actually less than a minute) the inky black hung on. Then far down the room, throwing into crazy silhouette a mass of limestone boulders and statuary, a soft glimmer of light appeared. Simultaneously I could hear the Rangers singing. And as the light advanced up the Big Room, jumping from rock to rock and wall to wall, the music swelled louder: "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me." When the song had reached its loudest, the lights were full on again and the Big Room was as bright as day.

Up, Up

The underground show was over. Our party cut across the Big Room to take the elevator to the surface. One of two elevators—the second longest express elevator in the world— whizzed us to the surface at a rate of better than twelve feet per second. I watched a tiny panel of lights that indicated our progress upward at fifty-foot intervals. Starting at "750," we rose rapidly. "700," "650," with the elevator emitting a curious whining noise and my ears popping. Finally, the elevator murmured to a stop, the door rolled back, and we were above ground in the bright sunlight of a New Mexico summer.

That is Carlsbad Caverns as I saw it. Plainly, it is more a matter of emotional experience than a sightseeing trip. The gigantic upward stretch of pillars, the magnificent sweep of twinkling drapes, the echoey stillness of mighty halls—all this and all the rest is better told in terms of what happens to you when you see it. Whether you will think Carlsbad Caverns one thing or another I cannot know. But this I am sure of: you will never forget them as long as you live.



These stalactites are graceful draperies of pure white limestone-so thin a light will shine through them.

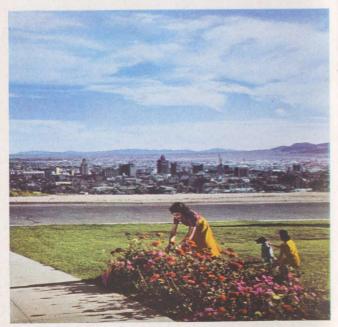
EL PASO AND JUAREZ

A Carlsbad Caverns side trip from El Paso is really two trips in one. You see Carlsbad Caverns National Park. And you see El Paso and Juarez. El Paso, the largest city on the Mexican border, looks down on the storied Rio Grande and is associated in song and story with daring exploits of the Texas Rangers. Behind the city are the Franklin Mountains, culminating in Mt. Franklin (7,152 feet). During the frontier days, El Paso was a romantic western outpost. Today the city retains the exciting flavor of pioneer days. In its hotel lobbies you'll see rugged men from the mountains and desert, from the mines and cattle ranches. Fort Bliss, largest U. S. Army cavalry post, is near El Paso.

Five minutes by streetcar, less by taxi, from downtown El Paso and you are across the International Bridge and into Juarez, one of the largest border towns. Five minutes after leaving El Paso's solid modern buildings, you are walking through narrow streets, past adobe buildings that are colored in pink and green and yellow. Everywhere are shops, places to buy things. Little stalls made of a few sticks and a piece of cloth and set along lop-sided walks. Booths in the Public Market. The better class shops that are situated in buildings. They seem to have everything in stock. A partial list of souvenirs begins with Mexican cigarettes which everyone buys, but very few enjoy. Then comes bubble-glass, giddy-colored sarapes, vegetables, meat, candy, leather goods, wearing apparel, hand-carved wooden statues. And throughout all your shopping someone (usually a small child) insists that your greatest need is a guide.

Juarez has its four star attractions: the old bull ring, Guadalupe Mission, the venerable jail, the Public Market and the dozens of cafes and cantinas that line the principal streets. In particular the Mission is well worth a trip of inspection. It was built by the Jesuits in 1659 and built to last. It has heavy overhead beams, walls 56 inches thick, and bells that were made in Spain and brought from the coast by mules.

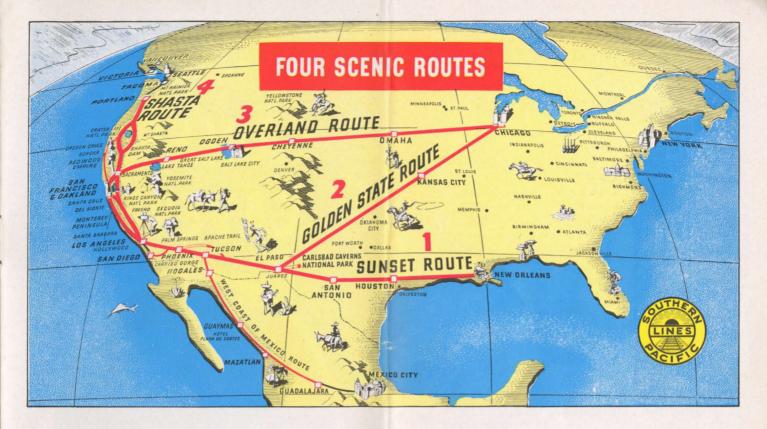
And what about Juarez and entertainment? The years that have passed since the old frontier days have not lessened the zest of her night life. There is a great collection of delicious things to eat and drink in Juarez. You can order a score of authentic Mexican dishes—everything from tortillas to enchiladas. The cafes along *Calle Comercio* and Juarez Avenue are known from coast to coast for their music and service. At night when the stars and the pink lights of the Plaza come on, you will hear guitar music and songs and laughter.



El Paso, with the mountains of Mexico in distance



In Juarez you'll bargain for beautiful Mexican things



QUICKEST WAY TO SEE CARLSBAD CAVERNS

Quickest way to see Carlsbad Caverns National Park on your trip east or west is from El Paso, on the main line of Southern Pacific's Sunset Route (New Orleans-Los Angeles) and Golden State Route (Chicago-Los Angeles).

Co-ordinated train and bus schedules enable you to arrive in El Paso on a morning Southern Pacific train, see the Caverns and continue your trip on another Southern Pacific train that night.

All-expense tour from El Paso to the Caverns costs only \$9.75, which includes round trip fare in streamlined, airconditioned motor coach, luncheon en route, Government admission fee and elevator fee returning to surface.

In answer to your questions

Q. Is the trip through Carlsbad Caverns safe?

A. Absolutely. Trails are wide and smooth and brilliantly lighted. National Park Service rangers who are thoroughly familiar with the Caverns accompany all parties. They carry large flashlights in case of emergency. There is no place in the Caverns where you have to stoop or crawl. There is no mud or dripping water to soil your clothes.

Q. Are any special clothes required for the trip?

A. No. It is advisable, however, to bring a sweater or light coat as the temperature in the Caverns is 56°. Incidentally, the air in the Caverns is exceptionally pure. Some mysterious air-conditioning system of Nature keeps it so.

How to see twice as much of America

Southern Pacific offers you an easy way to see twice as much of the United States on your trip east or west. As you can see from the map above, our Four Scenic Routes cross the country through four entirely different and interesting scenic regions. By going on *one* of these routes and returning on *another* S. P. route, you actually see twice as much as you would by going and returning the same way. And in most cases such a "go one way, return another" trip costs you not 1 cent extra rail fare. Any Southern Pacific representative (see list on back of this folder) will gladly help you plan your trip.

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F. S. MCGINNIS, Vice-President, System Passenger Traffic San Francisco, Calif., and Houston, Texas

(10-1-41)

My Trip Through CARLSBAD CAVERNS



The Friendly Southern Pacific