More on Baja California

What has saved Baja California up to the present from the fate which has overtaken most of California and almost all of the Pacific coast of the United States and Mexico is, as Krutch has said, the state of its roads. They are primitive to say the least. Under the best of conditions following long periods of drought they are passable by four wheel drive vehicles, most trucks, and passenger cars with high clearance, but the low-slung modern automobiles would be hung up in the rougher places and their gas tanks and oil pans punctured by rocks. By the judicious selection of routes some might get through to La Paz but the trip would be an ordeal and they would surely sustain considerable damage. Following heavy rains whoseoccurance is as unpredictable as is their intensity the roads, where they cross arroyos and outwash plains, become a morass of mud and are impassable to all vehicles.

The state of the roads is a fortunate corollary to an accident of history by which President Polk following the war with Mexico failed to include Baja California in the land ceded to the United States. If this had happened it can safely be assumed that modern highways, threading the irregular, mountainous coastline on both sides of the peninsula, would now be delivering an endless stream of automobilestraffic to every beach and cove and bay from San Diego and the mouth of the Colorado River to Cabo San Lucas eight hundred and fifty miles to the south. That the advance of civilization - human pre-emtion of the land, part of what is called progress - has already begun can be seen in the developments taking place along both coasts. For one hundred miles south of the border

to San Felipe on the Gulf and almost to El Rosario on the Pacific the works of man are spreading from foci of inoculation like the growth of mold in bread. Euckily, a trend in the technology of transportation is slowing down this overland advance which has been dependent here as elsewhere on the automobile. The trend is the development of the private and small commercial airplane. In this hurried industrial civilization people are becoming increasingly impatient in all they do, in their work, in their avocations, and in their recreation. Everything must be done in a hurry and less intensely; and paradoxically as more time becomes available less time is devoted to productive pursuits. The destination becomes the goal and the means by which the goal is attainedis gotten through as fast as possible because doing in this machine age is painful to most people. Enjoyment, "having fun",is the thing which usually connotes a vapid occupation, a shutting oneself and ones companions off from any thoughtful activity. Thus the airplane replaces the automobile as a means of transportation to remote places to which the arduous task of traveling by truck would merely aggravate man's acquired impatience. Since most men are not interested in what lies between their starting point and destination they choose to leapfrog by plane over the intervening space., And so the pressure applied by motorists simply by use for better roads is relaxed as this quicker means of transportation is offered. Lacking the added incentive of industrial need, which does not exist in Baja California, the roads remain unimproved.

Now, in several hours instead of in days or weeks vacationists are able to reach their destinations along the

coastline of Baja California. They can fly to Bahia de San Quintin, to Bahia San Louis Gonzaga, to Bahia de Los Angeles, to Mulege, to Loreto, to La Paz, and to Cabo San Lucas in all of which landing strips have been cleared for small planes. At these bays fishing boats are available for hire and accommodations of ever increasing luxuriousness are being provided. The barren mountain ranges and desert plains do not interest them; the heat and drought and dustiness of these intervening spaces they avoid at all cost. Only the adventurous and curious few and those who do not subscribe to the dominating time-is-money philosophy of our society will make the long, slow, often uncomfortable, but always fascinating journey by truck to these places. They do not provide the chief economic support for these resorts; the lazy, easy life they offer is not for them. They may pause briefly for a night or two to wash away the accumulated dust and rest and enjoy food of another's providing until a restlessness for the rutted winding road and ever unfolding landscape calls them back once more to the hostile interior where uncertainty is the stimulous to the excitement of the adventure.

Visitors to Baja California will certainly continue to increase in number, but the majority of them will go to the coastal oases for their short vacations and weekend fishing trips, and perhaps here and there for golf. Being in a hurry to make the most of limited time they will fly, and they will be well taken care of, and when they return home they will tell their friends about the comforts of the places they have visited, and the next year their friends will go too, and the tourist business in these oases will thrive. But the vast areas of the peninsula in between will remain vacant - that is the

hope. To them will come a slow trickle of motorists in Jeeps and trucks, not to stay but to pass through. For these more intrepid people the adventure of the journey, the wonders of the topography and of all the strange and unusual living things is their preoccupation. These parts of the peninsula need not be exploited for tourist trade because it is the very wildness of the these regions and the primitiveness of the roads that attracts these people.

Perhaps it is not too much to hope that in Baja the resources for these two kinds of recreation can be divisibly maintained: on the one hand coastal oases for the seekers after the easy life, and on the other a wild interior for the more hardy. By the accepted definition of roadlessness most of Baja is wilderness, explorable only on foot or horse. Transected, however, by unimproved roads it still offers a kind of experience, rapidly becoming unattainable in developed countries like Mexico and the United States, that of exploration by motor. In my youth, in 1922, I sought and found adventure by driving west in a Model T Ford on roads no less primitive than those that exist today in Baja California. This is a type of wilderness enjoyment which could long be provided by our southern neighbor.