

Chapter VIII

Exploring Southern California

June 21, 1925 – November 20, 1925

During the summer of 1925, Curly and Geannie loaded Sandy into the car and went exploring whenever he could get a three day pass. By then Sandy was crawling and growing fast. There was so much to see and do in Southern California. There were picnics to the beach, a trip to the desert, and what became two of their favorite places, the San Diego Zoo and the Mission Beach Amusement Park.

The thirty three acre Mission Beach Amusement Center just north of San Diego, which just opened on the Fourth of July that year, featured the Giant Dipper, a twenty six hundred foot wooden roller coaster, a fun house, carousel, roller rink, dance hall, a sixty by one hundred seventy five foot salt water indoor swimming pool called the The Plunge, and a beach front. When they went, they didn't get to ride the roller coaster because they couldn't take Sandy and there was no one to watch her. However they took in most of the other attractions.

Geannie's favorite trip that summer was to Los Angeles and a tour of the motion picture studios in Hollywood. Geannie loved the picture shows.

Ever full of surprises, Curly had another one for Geannie during the fall. He had her arrange for someone to watch Sandy for a few hours one Saturday. That someone was Susan McGowan. Geannie was a bit hesitant to leave Sandy for so long. They had never been apart for more than a couple hours. The reason for her concern was that Sandy was still nursing. Susan who had a three month old baby herself assured Geannie that if necessary she could nurse Sandy. That put Geannie to ease, somewhat. She was also worried about how uncomfortable she might get.

With Sandy taken care of, Curly and Geannie crossed the bay on the ferry and drove around the north end of the bay. At one point, Curly instructed her to tie her silk aviator scarf over her eyes. Not able to see where they were going she listened for clues. At one point she heard an airplane rather low overhead. A moment later Curly turned off the road and came to a stop. "Wait here." he instructed. "I'll be back in a moment."

Not wanting to ruin a good surprise, all of Curly's surprises were good, she waited patiently. A moment later, true to his word, Curly returned. Opening the door he took her hand. "Come with me." he said. "And leave for blindfold on until I tell you to take it off."

As he lead her along she could tell that she was walking on grass, perhaps through a pasture or a field. A moment later, they stopped. Curly let go of her hand and instructed, "Okay, now you can take off your blindfold."

Geannie untied her scarf and was surprised indeed to find herself standing next to a Curtiss Jenny, just like the ones Curly flew at flight school. It didn't dawn on her as to what he was up until she looked at

Curly. He was wearing a leather flight helmet, goggles, a parachute, and his red scarf. As things were registering, Curly handed her a helmet and goggles. "Here, put these on." he said beaming. Then asked, "Do you what to go for a ride?"

"I'd love to, Flyboy!" Curly always loved it when she got excited. Sometimes he would dream up things just to hear her squeal. "This is going to be so fun!" she said as she donned the flight gear.

She strapped on the parachute pack which was rather interesting with a dress on. The strap that fit between her legs gathered her dress into what looked like balloon pants. After strapping it on, she asked, "Hey Flyboy. Do I have this thing on right? It hangs clear down to my bottom."

Curly laughed as he looked it over. "The parachute pack serves double duty." he explained. "It also serves as your seat cushion." Then he got serious for a moment. "If we get in trouble and have to bail out, this is the ripcord," He said holding it in his hand. "Count to ten slowly before pulling it and just hang on."

Curly helped her into the front seat where she could have a better view. Once he strapped her in, he climbed into the rear seat. Signaling he was ready, the mechanic gave the propeller a spin and the engine came to life. A moment later they were taxiing into position on the runway at the San Diego Municipal Airfield. Given the clearance for take off, the Jenny bounded down the strip and into the air.

With Gennie's hair and scarf blowing in the wind behind her, Curly could hear her squealing and laughing. She even let out a couple of "Whaaa whooos!" They took off into the south over San Diego Bay. The Langley was tied up the pier at the north end of the island. As they passed low just ahead of the ship, Geannie got a good look at the ship he talked about so much. It didn't look so small to her. As they gained altitude she could look down on the air station. All of the airplanes looked like little boys' toys. She was even able to find their apartment.

Curly banked to the left a flew over downtown San Diego, climbing higher and higher into the sky. Before long, they were out over the countryside. The fields and towns below looked like an intricate patchwork quilt stitched together by the roads and streams. Curly yelled over the sound of the engine and the wind, "Are you ready for some real fun?"

Geannie reached out of the cockpit with her right hand and gave a thumbs up.

"Alright, hang on!" he hollered. He started going through some watered down aerobatic maneuvers. He didn't want to give her anything she wasn't ready for. From the rear cockpit he could hear Geannie hooting and hollering. He recognized them as gleeful, so he knew she was having a good time.

After showing off his aerobatics, he banked the aircraft, turning toward the coast. As they neared the shoreline he swooped down over a spot he knew to be home to a colony of California sea lions. "Look down to you left!" he shouted. He knew she saw them because she was pointing at them. Curly pulled up and came back for another pass before heading out over the calm, blue ocean.

Once out over the ocean, Geannie looked down in amazement to see a flock of seagulls below them. The sun brightly illuminated their gray upper wings with black tips, and white heads and tails making an interesting contrast against the blue backdrop of the ocean far below. "I'm flying with the birds!" Curly could hear her yell as she extended her arms as if they were wings.

Out a little distance from the shoreline, he turned and followed it south, back towards San Diego. Ahead of them he could see the distinct dark shape of a humpback whale just under the surface. Again he shouted, "Ahead to your right at one o'clock!" He dropped altitude to get closer. As they approached the magnificent animal, it breached the surface, spouted, and with a flap of its flukes, it disappeared back into the deep.

Flying along only a few feet above the water, the fresh sea air bathed their faces. A few miles later that encountered a school of frolicking porpoise. After making a second pass, Curly climbed high into the afternoon sky. The ocean seemed to stretch on endlessly toward the hazeless horizon the west. The inland mountains towered in the east.

Several minutes later, he began his descent and crossed the shoreline on the approach to the airfield. He made one pass signaling his intention to land. With the landing strip dead ahead, the Jenny dropped quickly until it was just above the ground. Almost instantly, the tires made contact as Curly throttled back the engine. Soon they were taxiing up to the main hangar. When Curly killed the engine, Geannie let out one last hoarse "Whaaa Whooo!"

Curly climbed out of the cockpit onto the wing and made his way to the front seat to unstrap his passenger. Geannie, standing in the open cockpit, turned and threw her arms around Curly's neck. "That... was... a...mazing!" she shrieked. Curly helped her out of the cockpit and onto the ground.

"Did you like that? You must have, you're all bug-eyed."

"And how! No wonder you love flying, Lieutenant! Do you think they will ever let girls be naval aviators?" she asked as she took off the parachute pack, goggles, and helmet. Walking back to the car holding his hand and clutching his arm with her other hand she went on, "I loved it! That was much better than the ride I had when we were fourteen. Can you take me up again sometime?"

Curly left Geannie in the car while he disappeared into hangar. It was then that she realized she had left her camera in her handbag in the car. At first she was disappointed but then shrugged it off thinking that the pictures would have probably turned out blurry anyway.

Momentarily Curly returned and got into the car. As they drove back onto the main highway and got up to speed, Geannie thanked him profusely for the experience. Still flying high, she stood up in the topless car and extended her arms as if they were wings. With her white silk scarf blowing in the wind behind her she dipped and raised arms as if she were flying.

She sat back down and snuggled up against Curly as close as she could, still allowing him to drive. She recounted the things she experienced and saw in every detail. It was difficult for her to identify the one single part of the ride as her favorite. She summed the whole thing up as the most fun she had ever had.

“Is there anything else you want to do before we go home? Maybe get something to eat?” Curly asked.

“No.” she insisted. “I need to get back to Sandy.”

“Sandy will be alright a little longer. Susan is taking good care of her,” Curly assured her.

“You don’t understand! **I need Sandy!**” she said emphatically. “I’m about ready to burst!”

Nodding his head, Curly drove on. He had never seen her so abrupt.

“I’m sorry, Curly.” she apologized. “We can get something to eat when we get home. But first I need nurse Sandy and relieve myself.”

The rest of the way home she continued to talk about the adventure. In fact that was all she could talk about for the next few days.

When they got home, Geannie took care of what she needed to while Curly fixed dinner. When both she and Sandy were satisfied, they sat down to supper. Later that evening after putting Sandy down, Geannie found a way to thank Curly. They both went to sleep with a smile on their face.

Curly’s annual thirty day leave was scheduled for November again that year. One evening over supper Curly and Geannie discussed what to do with the time. Sensing Geannie’s longing to go home and see her family, Curly suggested “Would you like to go home and visit the family?”

The always practical Geannie was hesitant. “Oh, I don’t know Curly. Of course I’d love to but its such a long trip. After all it was four days by train either way.”

“That would still give us three weeks.” Curly reasoned.

Geannie’s hesitance persisted, “Sandy is getting at that stage were she is pretty rambunctious. She is close to taking her first steps, you know. You have seen how she pulls herself up on things. I’m not sure she would travel very well. Last time she was just a baby and slept a lot. Maybe it would be better if we waited until next year.”

“What would you like to do?” Curly asked. “There is a lot of things we could do around here.”

“Do you want to know what I’ve been thinking that I would like to do, Curly?”

“No. What?” Curly asked.

“I want to take a trip down into Mexico along the coast.”

“Mexico?” Curly asked. “Really?”

“Sure. Why not?” Geannie said with assertiveness. We could take a week and spend the rest of the

time doing things around here, like you said. You have been pretty busy lately, a break would do you some good.”

“How do you think your folks would respond?” Curly asked. “They haven't seen you and Sandy for a year.” After pausing for a moment, he suggested, “Maybe you can invite them to come out here for a week.”

“Now, thats and Idea!” Geannie snapped back. “I'd bet they would love the Hotel del Coronado. You know how Daddy likes to do everything first class. That joint is right up his alley.”

“November is still a month way, do you think they could arrange it on such short notice?” Culry asked.

“There is one way to find out.” Geannie said excitedly. “I will call home tomorrow!”

Curly and Geannie spent the rest of the evening talking about the places they could go and the things they could do with his leave.

The next day Geannie did make that call from the public telephone located in the playground in the center of the complex. It was so good to hear their voices. When her mother first heard Geannie's voice on the other end of the line, she was afraid that something was the matter. Geannie assured her that everything was fine and that she had a proposal she wanted to make. Her father got on the phone and was more than happy to come. The Assembly wasn't in session and the bank could manage without him for a couple of weeks. He had already turned most of the day to day operations at the bank over to Geannie's oldest brother, Charlie. He asked Geannie to make the reservations and they would be there!

The Austins made he four day trip across country and arrived in Coronado on Halloween. Geannie and Sandy met them at the train station and took them to the Hotel del Coronado. Geannie had been by it but had never been in it. It was incredible! The Hotel del Coronado was an all wooden Victorian beach front resort. When it opened in 1888, it was the largest resort hotel in the world and the first to use electrical lighting. It had hosted presidents, royalty, and celebrities throughout the years.

Geannie got her parents settled and left them to rest after their long trip. The next day, Sandy's first birthday, Curly, Geannie, and Sandy came to spend the day. Senator Austin had a surprise for them. He had arranged for them to stay in an adjoining suite all to themselves. After breakfast, Curly and Geannie left Sandy with Grandma and Grandpa and hurried home to pack



the things they needed and returned to the hotel. Curly and Geannie thoroughly enjoyed the luxury of their suite, particularly when Sandy was with Grandma and Grandpa.

That afternoon Geannie's mother, Marie, threw a birthday party for Sandy complete with a birthday cake with one candle. It didn't make any difference to her, she just loved the attention she was getting, especially from these kind, sweet strangers. To her they were strangers. That thought pulled at Marie's heart strings. After all, this was the first time she had been around them since she was a tiny newborn.

Over the next week they spent together, Curly and Geannie drove them around and showed them the place they now called home. Of course, there was a day at the zoo and a day at the amusement park where Curly and Geannie finally got to ride the Giant Dipper. One day Geannie, Sandy, and Marie crossed the bay on the ferry and spent the day shopping in San Diego. Curly took his father-in-law across the bridge for a tour on the air station.

When it was learned that a Virginia state senator was on the post, the commander rolled out the red carpet and gave him the V.I.P. treatment. Anything to promote naval aviation. Senator Austin was given a tour of the entire facility. He got to sit in the cockpit of various aircraft and was briefed on their functionality and operation. His tour was even extended to the Langley. The Senator savored all of the attention he received

The highlight was the day Geannie's father chartered a private yacht. Early that morning they went down to the marina and boarded the forty foot double masted yacht named "California Dreamin" manned by a crew of three.

The California Dreamin cast off and set sail. As they made way around the north end of the bay, Curly was proud to show off the unusual looking ship with the flattop as they passed close aboard the Langley. The yacht under full sail stood out into the blue Pacific and soon left the coast behind. It appeared as nothing more than a distant mountain range. As they cruised under the blue sky, they observed the marine life of the blue deep. For a while, they were escorted by a school of dolphins.

The skipper of the California Dreamin changed course and sailed down a long the Mexican coast for a few hours before turning back. At noon, lunch was served on deck. As they dined, three albatross flew along side. The large, impressive birds soon left the yacht behind.

Numerous species of marine life were observed. A manta ray, a school of flying fish, and the most spectacular of the day was a pair of humpback whales breaching the surface, flipping over onto their backs and falling back into the sea with a tremendous splash!

Late in the afternoon the yacht changed course and headed back to San Diego. As the coast loomed larger, the sun dropped lower in the western sky dead astern. Just before entering the bay, the last ray of sun disappeared beyond the horizon illuminating the sky with a brilliant orange yellow hue. By the

time they tied up in the marina, it was nearly dark. It was only short drive from the marina back to the hotel.

This time Geannie didn't forget to take her camera. When she got the film developed she was pleased with the way the photographs turned out. The one of the whales breaching was particularly good.

The week came to an end and what a wonderful week it was. The little family said good-bye to Geannie's mother and father as they boarded the train for the return trip to Roanoke. As they bid farewell, Curly and Geannie promised that they would plan to come home next year.

As for Curly, he still had three weeks of his leave remaining. They stayed pretty close to home for the next week and just enjoyed being together. Geannie even canceled her piano lessons for the month.

During the third week in November they packed up the car and headed out on their four day trip to the Mexican beach resort of Ensenada, about ninety miles south of Coronado on the Baja California Peninsula. Once they crossed over into Tijuana, they found themselves as it were in a whole other world all together. The buildings were in disrepair, and the dirt roads were in rough shape, but passable. The people looked so poor. The children were dirty and barefooted. It wasn't uncommon to see small children with nothing on at all.

Just to be safe, Curly brought his Colt M1911 forty five caliber automatic pistol that was issued to him with his flight gear. He kept it under the seat, out of sight. Mexico was pretty safe for Americans at the time. Ten years earlier during the revolution, it was a totally different story.

They were able to communicate with the locals thanks to Geannie. In college she had taken two years of Spanish for her foreign language requirements. Ever since they began planning the trip, she brushed up on it and felt she knew enough to get by. Occasionally she had to refer to her bilingual dictionary. She decided that she wanted to become better versed in the language. She had found that there were opportunities when she could have used it living in Southern California so close to the Mexican boarder.

When they arrived in Ensenada they found a thriving, modern resort town. Since prohibition was in affect in the United States, Ensenada was in a convenient location to draw tourists seeking sunshine, sandy beaches with warm tropical water, entertainment, and of course booze. Curly and Geannie had no interest in the latter.

They found a quaint Spanish style hotel right on he beach with a vacancy sign prominently posted. "This looks like a nice place," Curly commented. "Lets check it out." They parked under the awning in front of the hotel and got out of the car.

Curly held back to keep an eye on their car while Geannie with Sandy in one arm approached the hotel desk. "Buenos tardes, señor." ("*Good afternoon, sir.*") she said confidently.

The desk clerk responded, "Buenos tardes, señora. Bienvenido al Hotel de Baja California."
(*"Good afternoon, ma'am. Welcome to the Hotel Baja California."*)

Geannie understood him, which boosted her confidence but when she said, "Nos gustaría una habitación para tres personas." (*"We would like a room for three people."*) she stumbled just a little.

To that, the desk clerk responded, "¿Le gustaría una habitación frente a la playa?" (*"Would you like a room facing the beach?"*)

Geannie was uncertain of what he said and asked, "¿Puede repetir eso, por favor?" (*"Can you repeat that please?"*)

"Would you like a room facing the beach?" the desk clerk repeated in perfect English but with a Spanish accent.

Determined to continue her conversation in Spanish, Geannie responded, "Sí, por favor." (*"Yes, please."*) From there she lost her nerve and conducted the rest of her business in English.

After checking in and taking their luggage to their room, they found an open air café nearby. Being early afternoon they were hungry. Seated at a table under an umbrella overlooking the ocean they decided on enchiladas. Curly wanted pork, and Geannie wanted chicken.

Again determined to speak Spanish, she placed their order. "Una enchilada de carne de cerdo y una enchilada de pollo, por favor." (*"A pork enchilada and a chicken enchilada, please."*)

The waitress, a beautiful young Mexican maiden, wrote down their request and asked, "¿Qué le gustaría beber?" (*"What would you like to drink?"*)

Pleased with herself, she responded, "Coca-Cola, por favor." (*"Coac-Cola, please."*)

"¿Dos?" (*"Two?"*)

"Sí, dos." (*"Yes, two."*) Geannie responded.

Curly, holding Sandy on his lap, took Geannie's hand in his and said looking into her eyes, "You know, you never cease to amaze me. I find more reasons to love you every day."

Gennie giggled "Gracias, mi amor." (*"Thank you my love."*)

"How did you manage to remember Spanish from college? I don't remember a bit of French."

Soon they were enjoying their enchiladas and sipping on their ice cold Coca-Colas while looking out over the beach.

"This is just beautiful," Curly said. "I'm sure glad that you thought of this."

After lunch they went back to their room to rest after the long drive. After a good nap they were ready to enjoy themselves and relax. The first order of business was a stroll along the beach.

The beach, which was a short stroll from the hotel, was somewhat protected by the Bay of All Saints and provided an excellent place to swim. At the time there were a couple of dozen people out

enjoying the beach. Two or three boats were not far off shore out in the bay.

As they walked along the shore, the warm tropical water lapped at their bare feet. They stopped and set Sandy down on the sand and let the water wash around her. She squealed with delight as she slapped the water with her hands. She reached down into the sand with one hand and pulled up a handful. Giggling, she squished it through her fingers as she held it up to the two adoring big people who towered above her.

“She is becoming like you more and more every day.” Curly said thoughtfully. “She sure has your laugh.” he added.

Curly and Geannie both sat down in the sand and played with their daughter as the water lapped around them. Curly began building a sand castle, until an unexpected wave washed over it and knocked Sandy over backwards. Geannie quickly grabbed her before the water could wash over her face. Sandy only cried for a moment as Geannie bounced her in her arms.

They walked a little further down the beach and Sandy began squirming, indicating that she wanted down. With Geannie holding one hand and Curly the other Sandy dangled her feet in the water as she attempted to take steps as if to keep up.

“That water sure looks inviting,” Curly said wistfully as he winked at Geannie.

Winking back, “Its a good thing we're wearing our bathing suites, then isn't it!” Gennie laughed.

At that, Curly pulled Sandy up into one arm and took Geannie by the other hand and led his girls out to where the water was waist deep. The three of them splashed and played in the afternoon sun.

Holding Sandy with one hand under her tummy and the other one on her back, Curly held her on the surface of the water. Instinctively holding her head up, she squealed and giggled as she attempted dog paddling like motions.

“Geannie, why don't you go on and have a good swim.” Curly encouraged. “I'll keep Sandy entertained.”

“Okay.” Geannie agreed, “Then you can go for a swim while I feed her.”

At that, Geannie launched out into deeper water. After swimming out a short distance she disappeared feet first into the water. A moment later Curly saw her head break the surface long enough to take a breath. While Geannie played dolphin, Curly took Sandy back up into shallower water and sat down to play with the other woman in his life.

After twenty or thirty minutes, Geannie waded toward them and sat down with them. “That was invigorating!” she exclaimed. She laid back in the shallow water with only her face above the surface and stretched out for a moment. She sat up when Sandy splashed water in her face.

“I'll take her now.” Geannie said scooping Sandy into her arms. “I'll bet your hungry aren't you, little

girl?" Geannie stood up and waded onto the beach. Curly watched her from behind as he floated on his back out into deeper water.

He stopped and stood up in chest deep water and watched as Geannie spread out a blanket in the shade of a big rock. She sat down on the blanket and unbuttoned the top of her bathing suit and slipped one side of it down over her shoulder. Then she picked up Sandy as she folded back here suit and gently cradled Sandy in her arms. Curly watched in amazement and thought to himself again just how blessed he was. Turning his attention to ocean surrounding him, he too went for an invigorating swim.

After about a half an hour, Curly waded out of the water toward Geannie and Sandy. They were right where he last seen them. As he approached them he could tell that they were both fast asleep. Sandy's head was cocked back at an odd angle. After standing there for a moment looking at them, he knelt down beside Geannie and gently woke her up. He took Sandy from her arms as Geannie quickly gathered herself back together.

Curly stretched out on the blanket as they gazed out to sea and visited as a gentle sea breeze washed over them. By that time, the sun was getting low in the afternoon sky. Sandy had woke up as well. With Sandy in one arm and the other around Geannie's waist, they strolled back to the hotel.

Once back at their room, they changed out of their bathing suits and got dressed up to go into town for dinner. Everything was close by so they walked into town as dusk settled. Town was a buzz as the night life began to stir in the cantinas. As they walked down the boardwalk, pushing Sandy in her stroller, they came to an area with tables set up, surrounding a stage. "This looks like an interesting place," Geannie said reading the a large poster written in Spanish. "They have a wide ranging menu." she said and added "There is a show at seven thirty."

They selected a table close to the stage and took their seats. A young man approached the table and greeted them in English. Geannie was disappointed. He introduced himself as Jesús and handed them their menus, which were in both English and Spanish. "Would you like a high chair for the bambina?" He asked gesturing to Sandy who was on her daddy's lap.

"Yes, please," Curly answered.

After looking over the menu they made their selections. Jesús returned with the high chair and poised himself next to their table ready to take their order. "I'll have the carne asada," Curly requested.

Turning toward Geannie, Jesús was ready to take her order. He was somewhat surprised when the beautiful, fair skinned gringo señora said, "Me gustaría que la carne de cerdo asado a la parilla, por favor." (*I want the grilled pork, please.*) When Jesus was finished writing her order she added, "Y dos coca-colas" (*And two coca-colas.*)

Jesús commented, "Usted habla muy bien el español, señora." (*You speak Spanish very well,*

ma'am.)

“Muchas gracias, Jesús.” (*Thank you, Jesús.*) she replied.

“So what are you having, Geannie? I didn't understand a word of any of that, except for Coca-Cola.”

“I'm having the barbecued pork,” she explained. “Whats it been?” she questioned, “Six or seven years since I took Spanish. With a little brushing up, I'm amazed at how well it is coming back. Of course, I have to think about it before I say anything.” Then she told Curly about her goal to become better at it.

As they visited while waiting for their meal, the tables began to fill up, mostly with Americans. Before long Jesús returned with their food. Curly's mouth watered as he gazed at the feast before him. The dish consisted of pieces of thick sirloin steak marinated with olive oil and sea salt and sprinkled with lemon pepper, garlic salt, and a splash of lime. His carne asada was served with fresh guacamole, grilled onions, black beans, and fresh salsa.

Geannie's barbecued pork came with rice pilaf, grilled pita bread, and a green salad laced with crumbled feta cheese and black olives.

They enjoyed their meal as they visited. A mariachi band meandered though the tables serenading the guests. From time to time they gave Sandy samples of some of the softer morsels from their plates. Some she liked, with some of it she made funny faces and spit it out.

Jesús returned a little while later. Addressing Curly he said, “How is your carne asada, sir?” With a mouth full, he put his fore finger to his thumb and extended the other three fingers and flashed the okay sign. With a wink and nod of the head he muttered, “Mmmmmm!”

Turning to Geannie, Jesus asked, “¿Cómo es su carne de cerdo asado?” (*How's your pork roast?*)

Putting down her fork she looked into the hansom young brown face and said, “¡Muy bien! Esto es delicioso.” (*Very good! This is delicious.*)

“Is there anything else I can get you?” He asked.

Curly, savoring another byte waved his hand and nodded.”

Geannie asked, ¿Puedo tener un poco de pan de pita más para el bebé?” (*Can I have some more pita bread for the baby?*)

“Si señora, un momento.” (*Yes ma'am, one moment.*) Jesús nodded.

A moment later he returned with some pita bread for Sandy. “¿Cuál es ella nombre?” (*What is her name?*) he asked.

“Ella nombre es Sandy.” (*Her name is Sandy.*) Geannie replied proudly.

Jesús left them to finish their meal. Once their empty dishes were set aside, he returned and collected them, just as the show was about to begin. The band that had playing during the course of the

meal was now seated on the stage. All of a sudden the stage was filled with the whirling colors of the flowing skirts of six beautiful señoritas. They danced around six handsome hombres dressed in black and stomping the heels of their boots. Their broad sombreros hardly seemed to bob as they danced.

The dancers performed several traditional Mexican folk dances including the ever favorite Mexican hat dance. At one point, the dancers rushed down into the audience and abducted their partners for their final number. As Geannine was whisked to stage by a tall dark stranger, Curly clapped and cheered. Sandy reached out to her with both hands as if to pull her back.

Once on stage, the dance was demonstrated to the unsuspecting participants. Their partners for the dance then brought them into the choreographed confusion that resembled a western square dance. Geannie quickly got into step and was whirling about as she was passed from one partner to another.

At the conclusion of the number, Geannie breathlessly returned to their table along with the others to the cheers of the audience and the applause of the dancers. That concluded the program and the guests began clearing out. As Curly gathered up Sandy, Geannie reached into her handbag for her pocketbook and left the amount of the check on the table along with a generous tip for Jesús.

That night after a long, wonderful day, they quickly fell asleep to the sound of the surf and the warm gentle breeze that whispered through the open windows.

The next day was spent exploring Ensenada. They went into all of the little shops, toured the old Spanish mission, and visited the tourist attractions. About mid day they paused for lunch at another of the many outdoor cafés.

As they were wandering around town, they happened across Jesús, their waiter from the night before. He was manning a shoeshine stand outside of one of the shops. “¡Hola Jesús!” (*“Hello, Jesús!”*) Geannie greeted him. “What are you doing here?” she asked in English.

“Ah, señora. ¿Cómo está usted?” (*“Ah, madam. How are you?”*) Jesús returned the greeting. “At night I wait tables, in the daytime I shine shoes.”

“Curly could use a shoeshine.” Geannie volunteered.

“But they’ll just get all dusty again.” Curly protested.

Geannie leaned into Curly’s ear and whispered adamantly, “Let Jesús shine your shoes, Lieutenant.”

“Well, I guess they can use a buffing.” Curly agreed as he sat in the chair with the tall legs.

As Jesús worked on Curly’s shoes, he engaged them in conversation. They learned that Jesús was from Ensenada and was a business major at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. He had to take a break from his studies and come home to earn enough money for his senior year. He lived with his widowed mother and younger sister in the shanty town outside of the main tourist area. His

father had been killed during the revolution. He hoped to earn enough money to go back to school for the next fall term. He hoped to get a good job so he could provide a better home for his mother.

Geannie asked him if he had a girlfriend. He did. She was also attending the university and they wanted to get married when they finished school.

When Jesús was finished, Curly was impressed with the shine on his shoes. "Wow, he said, I wish I had my dress shoes with me. With a shine like that, they'd easily pass inspection!"

Geannie reached into her handbag to get her pocketbook. Instead she pulled out her camera and had Curly take a picture of her with Jesús. She put the camera away and retrieved her pocketbook. Looking at the price he had posted next to the chair, she gave him a quarter for a nickel shoeshine. "Adiós a Jesús, y buena suerte." (*"Goodbye Jesus, and good luck."*)

Jesús bowed humbly and said in Spanish, "Gracias señora. Que San Nicolás vele siempre sobre vosotros." (*"Thank you ma'am. May St. Nicholas always watch over you."*)

As they walked away, Geannie admitted, "I didn't quite catch all of that. Something about Saint Nicholas."

"Was he referring to Christmas?" Curly asked.

"No," Geannie said. Then she explained, "Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of kindness and giving. I think he was invoking a blessing on us."

That evening they returned to the hotel with tired feet and more than a few souvenirs. The last day involved a trip into the desert and another visit to the beach. That night also included the serenade of the ceaseless surf. On the morning of fourth day they loaded up their car and began the slow drive back to Coronado.

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Belmont Park is a historic oceanfront amusement park located in the Mission Bay area of San Diego, California. The park was developed by sugar magnate John D. Spreckels and opened on July 4, 1925 as the Mission Beach Amusement Center. The attractions and rides that remain from the original 1925 park include the Giant Dipper, a wooden roller coaster that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the only remaining roller coaster on the West Coast built by noted coaster builders Prior and Church. Another historic facility is The Plunge, an indoor swimming pool. The Plunge was originally a salt water pool; it now contains fresh water.

The San Diego Municipal Airfield is a fictional predecessor to the San Diego Municipal Airport – Lindbergh Field dedicated on August 16, 1928. The grassy airfield is depicted as a pasture in the same general location as the airport.

The Hotel del Coronado is a beach front luxury hotel in the city of Coronado, just across the San

Diego Bay from San Diego, California. It is one of the few surviving examples of an American architectural genre: the wooden Victorian beach resort. It is one of the oldest and largest all-wooden buildings in California and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977. When it opened in 1888, it was the largest resort hotel in the world and the first to use electrical lighting. It has hosted presidents, royalty, and celebrities throughout the years.

The M1911 is a single-action, semi-automatic, magazine-fed, and recoil-operated forty five caliber handgun with a seven round clip. It was the standard-issue side arm for the United States armed forces from 1911 to 1985. It was widely used in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.