



Scotty in his castle.

DEATH VALLEY SCOTTY

By H. MELVILLE HOCKER

NO! I never knew Death Valley Scotty personally. But I shook the hand that shook Scotty's. Actually there were a lot of other indirect ways that Scotty's personal and mysterious life came my way.

In every sense of the word, Scotty was a real character. No doubt, some readers of *Odyssey* either knew him personally or were in his proximity during those colorful days, many of which he spent in our own frontier town of San Bernardino. In spite of his exhibits of throwing gold nuggets on the bar to "buy the house a drink," his intimate life was virtually unknown.

This writer's wife was a legal secretary for a young attorney in Long Beach, who at the time was building a reputable practice in that fair city by the sea. Moses E. Lewis, Jr., had his offices in the Heartwell Building on Pine Avenue, a street equivalent to San Bernardino's "E" Street, when a poor, dishevelled lady stumbled into the foyer and asked the elevator operator to direct her to a practicing attorney. Ascending past the mezzanine to the 3rd floor of this new and modern building, the cooperative elevator jockey directed this hungry soul across the hall to the offices of attorney Lewis. Mrs. Walter Scott sought council!

Scotty had the image of a recluse; an old derelict; a hardpan miner who had lived alone in the desert for years. Therefore, it was difficult for Mrs. Scott to convince the attorney that she, indeed, was seeking a divorce from the notorious Scotty. Suffice it to say that later divorce was granted, proper settlement made and the records of said divorce filed and now preserved in the courthouse records as well as in the files of the attorney for the plaintiff. Today, on the office wall of "Mose" Lewis, Jr., hangs the framed, autographed, picture of Mrs. Scott, whom the attorney considers his "Patron Saint."

It was learned that a Mr. Johnson, a wealthy personage from Chicago who had become acquainted with Scotty during his trip to the desert in pursuit of better health, had financed the entire hoax of Scotty's gold mine back in the hills. Johnson's wealth enabled the building of Scotty's Castle, the chartering of a train for Scotty's record-breaking run from Los Angeles to Chicago, and his splurges into our town where he spent so lavishly. Also revealed was that shortly after Mrs. Scott's marriage to Scotty a son was born of this union and at the time of the Court action was a student at Stanford University. Mrs. Scott had endeavored to keep this marriage secret for many years and actually appeared as an employee at the curio shop on the grounds of the Castle, selling post cards and other trinkets.

When the Castle was purchased later by a religious group and admission charged for a guided tour of the unique structure, my wife and I took the tour. And in the pipe organ room at the end of the tour the guide's final pitch was that Scotty had never married and chose to remain a bachelor during his lifetime. This writer could stand it no longer and interjected in front of the entire tour assemblage that he had factual knowledge of Scotty's marriage, their son and that the tour had better stop fooling the people. The guide's answer was that he simply was reading from a prepared text. Oh yes! The man with the hand that shook Scotty's hand still lives in Devore, is retired, and if anyone should insist, will spin many more true yarns about Death Valley Scotty!