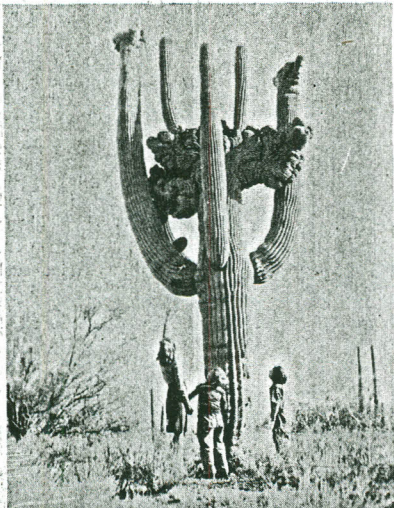
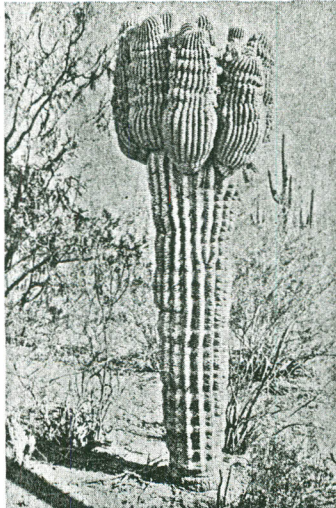
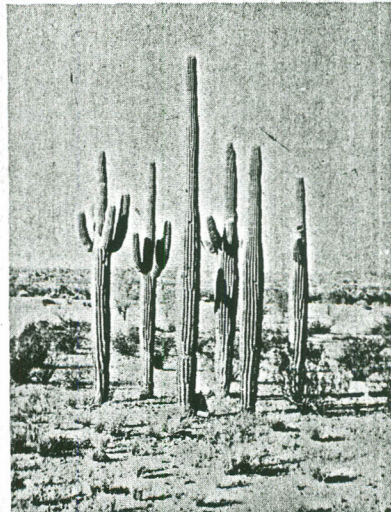




Candelabrum



Punch Bowl



The Council

Odd Members of the Saguaro Family . . .

By NATT N. DODGE

DESERT Indians have a legend. Unworthy tribesmen, according to the story, must linger on earth many years after death before their spirits pass on to the happy hunting ground of the great hereafter.

With the last heartbeat of each Indian whose life has been marked with dishonest or unfriendly deeds, a tiny Saguaro comes into being. Into this cactus is drawn the unhappy soul to be imprisoned within the spine-clad body.

Not until the little Saguaro becomes an ungainly giant, dies, and its pulpy body decays is the soul at last set free and permitted to leave this earth. Since Saguaros often reach an age of 150 years this punishment is not to be considered lightly.

This is the answer given by the Indians when travelers in the Southwest ask about the odd and unusual forms often found in the Saguaro forests. Some of the giant cacti have truly human figures, lifting their arms in supplication to the sun god. Others seem to writhe in the anguish of lifelong imprisonment. Occasionally the resemblance is so marked and the suggestion of the legend so powerful one is tempted to cut down a particularly pathetic figure to free the suffering soul and let it wing its way to another land.

All Saguaros do not resemble humans,



Traffic Cop

however. The person with imagination will see all kinds of odd forms and figures in the great Saguaro areas that flank the highways through Arizona where most of the cacti of this species are found.

Reg Manning, in his *Cartoon Guide of Arizona*, says of the Saguaro: —

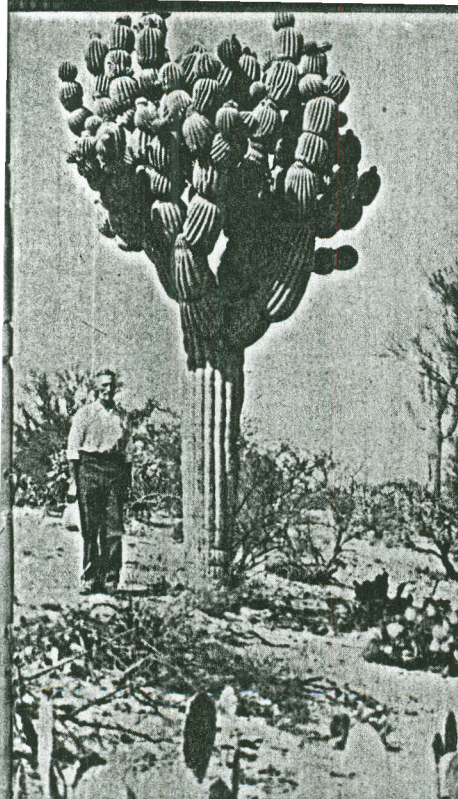
"To the Saguaro (sah-wah-ro) alias the Giant Cactus, goes Number One ranking among all desert plants. It is first in size, first in longevity, and first by vote of the legislature, which designated the blossom the State Flower of Arizona.

"The Saguaro is light olive green in color—in shape it is like a giant baloney standing on end, with enormous weenies growing out of it for arms. Usually the arms grow up, but often they are twisted around like a man trying to reach the itchy spot on his back.

"Saguaros get as tall as the average high diving tower—40 feet—and grow scores of branches. The branchless ones are mere saplings. You can judge the age of Giant Cacti, with fair accuracy, by their height. They grow an average of about two inches a year.

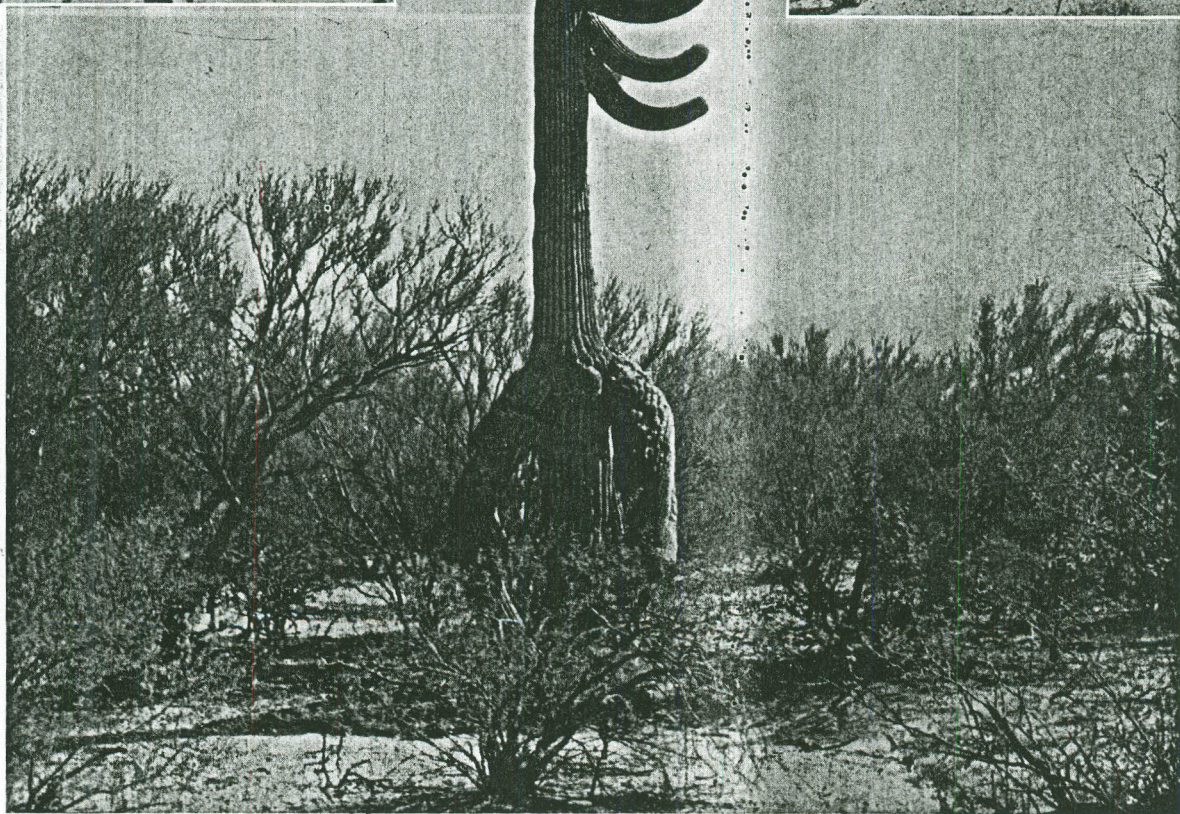
"Trunks and branches are corrugated top to bottom, which allows the plant to expand a la accordion, to store more water in its body during the rainy season. In this way it can retain enough water to last as long as four years without a refill. What an idea that'd make for a new fountain pen."

The DESERT MAGAZINE



Left—This Saguaro borrowed its pattern from the man who peddles the balloons on circus day.

Right—Meet the dunce. He even has a patch on the seat of his trousers.



This is the prehistoric dinosaur—reared up on his hind legs looking over the landscape for food or enemies.