OTP Hike #0087 HIKE FOR 8/7/91

57 START @ /OAM Season: All Year

O'Neill Park Trail

Trabuco Canyon to Ocean Vista Point

3 miles round trip; 600-foot elevation gain

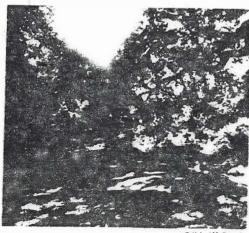
The soldier marching with Captain Gaspar de Po Rada's 1769 expedition who lost his firearm in this hilly region would not to be astonished at the number of Orange County place names inspired by his mistake. Trabuco, which means "blunderbuss" in Spanish, now names a canyon, a creek, a plain, a trail, a road and even a ranger district of the Cleveland National Forest.

If the unknown soldier who lost his blunder buss Tred this way again he would be amazed at the names on the Name of the LAND and at the land itself, so drastically has it changed. MAYBE HE WOULD recognize Trabuco Canyon, at least that part of it saved non-Suburbanization by O'Neill Regional Park. Here the modern trekker can explore a small slice of the pastoral Southern California of two centuries ago.

This land of grassy meadows, relling tills and oak woodland was originally part of Rancho Trabuco Two leagues granted to Santiago Arguello in 1841 by Mexican Governo, Alvarado. The rancho had various lessees and owners until it was purchased by James Flood, a wealthy businessman and his partner Richard O'Neill, a packing house owner. O'Neill built up quite a ranching empire here at lifornia. O'Neill's Orange County property passed to lin turn,

gave 278 acres of Trabuco Canyon to Orange County for a park in 1948. Today, after various gifts and purchases, the park encompasses 1,700 acres of woodland and brushy hills, taking in Trabuco Canyon and neighboring Live Oak Canyon.

A good way to learn about the ecology of Trabuco Canyon is to walk the park's 1 1/2mile (round trip) nature



O'Neill Park

trail. Trabuco Creek Trail, with stops keyed to a pamphlet available at the park's entry station, meanders through an oak/sycamore woodland and explores Plano Trabuco, or Trabuco Flat, a level alluvial surface deposited by runoff from the slopes of the Santa Ana Mountains.

Another way to explore a bit of rural Orange County is to hike the park's various fire roads and trails on a route I've dubbed O'Neill Park Trail. The trail ascends to Ocean Vista Point, which offers fine constant and canyon views.

Directions to trailhead: From the San Diego Freeway (5) in El Toro exit on El Toro Road and drive 7 1/2 miles to Santiago Canyon Road (S 18). Turn right and proceed 3 miles to O'Neill Regional Park. There is vehicle entry fee. Park in the day use lot near the entrance.

The Hike: From the entry station, walk north on a service road that parallels Live Oak Canyon Road. Soon you'll head left on a paved road that ascends toward some water tanks. After a quarter-mile's travel, leave the pavement and turn right on a dirt road. Two turns bring you to a junction with a dirt road on your right (an optional return route from the top).

Continue your ascent along a ridge. Over your shoulder are two scene typical of rural Orange County: Red-tailed hawks circling over classi Southland ranching country in one direction, and suburbs-in-the-mal in the other.

Continue on a last steep ascent toward what appears to be a Star War movie set, but is actually Ocean Vista Point, sometimes known a "Cellular Hill." Up top, communications hardware helps car phones complete their calls.

From the 1,492-foot summit, enjoy clear-day coastal views from Santa Monica Bay to San Clemente, with Catalina Island floating on the horizon.

For a different return route, head back two hundred yards and make a left at the first fork. Descend to an unused kid's camp, then follow the park's service road back to the trailhead.

MIKE

