

## Notes on Alden Miller

Loye Miller

*naturalist*  
No! I did not make Alden Miller a naturalist. A higher Power did that. However, we did assist nature in making him an "outdoors man." As a matter of fact he came near to being born a nature man. His mother and I had a habit of walking in the nearby hills on week-end mornings. On Feb. 6, 1906 we had started on such a walk but had not gotten far from home when we decided it were best to return home.

Within an hour or two Alden H. Miller drew in his first breath of life and broadcast his first message to the world. (It was music to us.)

We had started out to see the season's first wild flowers, the shooting stars (Dodecatheon). On the first anniversary of that day I took him on my shoulders to the hills. We spread a robe on the ground and let him roll about among the shooting stars. We dubbed him "the shooting star baby." For the remainder of his days he was a naturalist.

Another attribute that came to him with his chromosomal complex was a gift for music. I think he had "absolute pitch"--a gift that served him well in recognizing or in repeating the calls of birds. Before he could talk he would sit in his mother's lap at the piano bench and listen to the movements from the "Pastoral Symphony" and if she played from memory a theme that did not appear on that page of the music, he would object strenuously and point to the music. I checked him on this phenomenon repeatedly before I would believe it. He sang as a child and after his voice changed had a beautiful baritone which we had carefully trained till he became soloist in the large chorus choir of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. His Dad sat up in the back row of that same choir but the four years of work in that splendid chorus formed one more delightful link between father and son.

Under the influence of some of his associates he considered going into professional musicianship and he came to me for advice. I think that my discussion of the subject was impartial but when he asked me if he could make a living as a Biologist my reply was that he would never be wealthy but would always be "rich." I was glad when he decided for Biology.

He left Los Angeles with a B.A. in Zoology and Chemistry to take graduate work with Joseph Grinnell in Berkeley. His musical training gave him a position as soloist in the First Congregational Church of Oakland which helped defray expenses. He had a teaching assistantship in Zoology and married a splendid girl, Virginia Dove, who turned all her own abundant energies and genius into the common cause. It was an ideal combination--where the wife deserves (but seldom is accorded) equal credit. She supplies those "intangibles" that do not appear upon the printed page nor can they be adequately expressed.