

Tom Alexander Finds 'Dudes' Always Make Grade On Park Trips

By BILL SHARPE

On a lowering June day, 18 'Wilderness Riders' fitted themselves to saddles and horses preparatory to a 10-day pack-trail trip through the most rugged mountain country remaining in eastern America—the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The party consisted of 13 women and five men—every one of them city folks. None of them had ever ridden the wilderness before. One of them, an amiable landscape architect from New Orleans, confessed blithely, as he started to mount a pasture-green horse, that he hadn't ridden in 20 years. And when he said it, Rufe Sutton, hard-bitten hostler at Cattaaloochee Ranch, turned his eyes grimly toward the distant blue of Clingman's Dome and muttered something which might have been a prayer. One of the women had "cramped" on riding along Cincinnati footpaths for six months. Her instructor gave her a diploma, his permission to take the trip and, she added, a fervent blessing and a rabbit's foot.

Others in the group included government employes, a contractor and his wife from Florida, a female "private eye" who watches out for shoplifters in a large New York department store, a commercial artist, and a statistician from the New York City Health Department. A more unlikely bunch of toughies you never met this side of a cream puff.

A bunch of the hill folks leaning against the corral fence made books on which one of the tenderest first would be sent back off the trail, but Tom Alexander, leader of many a pack trail trip, warned them to be moderate. "Dudes'll do it," he said. "None of this crowd will give up—I'll bet you." Pride, long anticipation of the trip, good sportsmanship, the expense (\$180 for the expedition—something keeps them going in the face of unaccustomed ruggedness.

On the first night, the riders camped at Heintooga Ridge, a lonely outpost on top of the Smokies, after a rather difficult 8-mile ride. Just as dinner was being prepared, the heavens opened up. In two days, 12 inches of rain fell—a record even in a country known for sudden cloudbursts. In the Smokies, trails disappeared into quagmires, mild mountain streams became unfordable torrents. Soaked to the skin, the little band rode forlornly back to the ranch in the morning.

But, dried out, they bravely hit the trail again the next day, and Dudes'll do it every time.

not a rider whimpered or considered deserting for the rest of the 150-mile trip.

These trips into the tough lands of America are sponsored by the American Forestry Association, and are held in wilderness areas throughout the country. On this Smoky trip, the fee was \$180 a rider, but total outlay was considerably more, since riders must pay their transportation from distant points and are responsible for their own gear.

Itinerary was skillfully mapped out with the shortest day's ride an 8-miler, the longest a 17-mile ride, with a couple of in-camp or "loafing" days inserted to give the party time for resting and individual explorations.

Such a trip is expertly staffed, however, and the dudes are in no danger of becoming babes in the woods. On the Smokies, there were a dozen pack-animals with four hostlers in charge. In addition, there was a doctor, a representative of the American Forestry Association, and a park ranger. Also the leader, Tom Alexander, and his trusty lieutenant, Jujin Alexander, a highly competent 15-year-old girl, who knows as much about the Smokies and the ornery habits of pack animals as her pappy does. She's the youngest licensed guide in the National Park Service. Also a second lieutenant, a lugubrious woodsman named Rufe Sutton, a gentleman who showed the tenderfeet how to start and maintain a cooking fire in a driving downpour.

With such a staff, it was not quite like Dan'l Boone going over the wilderness, especially since the riders were following defined and mapped trails to predetermined camp grounds. But it was rough enough for anyone, even a woodsman, when the no-see-ums appeared and the saddle was soaked, and the trails narrowed. There were always the compensatory break days of riding on top of eastern America with views stretching into Tennessee and Virginia. When the group got back for the final square dance at the ranch-house Tom, wise in the ways of dudes, figured it out.

"They didn't come down for the views. They came for adventure and roughing it. And on this trip, brother, they got it. Wait what I tell you that miserable night they spent in the steady downpour with shelter on Heintooga is what they'll always remember the most, and tell their friends about."

"They showed each other and themselves they can take it. But, dried out, they bravely hit the trail again the next day, and Dudes'll do it every time."

CHOOSE FREEDOM TO IRON CURTAIN



CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S TOP-RANKING tennis stars, Jaroslav Drobny (left) and Vladimir Cernik are shown in Gstaad, Switzerland, after refusing to obey an order by their government to return home. Recently they were told not to take part in a tennis tourney at Gstaad because Spanish and German players were competing. Denouncing the Communist regime they played in the tournament. Literally men without a country, the two men hope to find refuge in the United States. (International)

Homecoming Day Set For Aug. 7 In Iron Duff

By MRS. ROY MEDFORD
Mountaineer Correspondent

August 7 will be Homecoming Day for the folks who used to live in Iron Duff.

They'll get together with their former neighbors for a day of fellowship at the Antioch Baptist Church.

The morning worship services will open the program, with the Rev. L. J. Rogers, the pastor, preaching the sermon.

After dinner on the grounds, there will be music and brief talks by some of the people who have come back to visit their former home community.

An invitation is extended to everyone who once lived in the community.

The former Iron Duff citizens will find some new changes in their old stamping grounds for the Community Development Pro-

Truman's Ex-Partner Thinks His Hat Helped

CLEVELAND (U. P.) — Eddie Jacobson, once the business partner of President Truman, hopes that it may have been his hat that brought the President good luck on his campaign last year.

In Oklahoma, Jacobson said, the President admired a hat he was wearing. That's the last he saw of the hat, because Harry Truman wore it throughout the campaign (they have the same hat-size).

Jacobson, in Cleveland for a Bnai B'rith convention, is a staunch admirer of Harry Truman, whom he has known since 1916. Together they helped organize the Second Missouri Field Artillery, Battery D, went to France, and opened a business on their return.

gram has been working for nearly six months.

One of these changes they will see when they come to the church for services and sit on the new pews that were installed recently.

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