

the painted box

By Wendy Thomson

(Third installment of notes on the 47th annual ride of the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies)

As if the scenery and good riding on the trails aren't enough, the organization keeps the fun going far into the night, starting with introductions the first evening, then swinging into singings, square dances, polkas, etc., with Dan Dennis of Calgary on the accordion (any accomplished accordionist gets the chance to go on the ride, free, plus a small wage), and various people on the guitar. Everything sounds so much better around a huge fire at night.

Wednesday, this year's president of the organization, Howard Watkins of Calgary, got a pack horse contest going. For this, three guides taught six girls how to load up a pack horse, then we were timed. First time round, I was on Ron's team (he's THE man behind the scenes at camp), and won with a time of 1:55 minutes plus a five second penalty for having one rope loose. (The time was only a few seconds more than that of the "pros" when they did it.) I was greatly pleased with myself.

But the night guide, Dan, got stuck with me, even though he explained everything carefully, he went at it from such a different angle that I got all balled and was quite ashamed of myself.

To try to teach someone who can't even get a half-hitch straight how to do a diamond hitch under a box on top of a horse and in a hurry — HA! I really loused it up. The one thing that made me feel better was the BOTH these guys tried to tell us that it was the other that did his tying all wrong.

Much of the entertainment goes on on the trails when the guides get bored. Once Mike, the head guide, undid the cinch on one girl's saddle at a smoke stop. Naturally, when she went to mount up and put her weight in the stirrup she found herself with a saddle in her lap. The whole time at lunch stops, this kid was sneaking around trying to catch Mike unawares and push him in the lake, not even giving up when he kept reversing the situation and soaking her more and more.

To try to wear a bit of the vim and vigour out of her and a few other girls, he and Dan arranged to take them snipe hunting that night. They do it a little differently from the way Gord, once offered to show me. Mike's way, a girl holds a flashlight over a paperbag while another knocks two rocks together. The snipe hears the noise and runs toward the light into the bag. The guides also offered to send them hunting for a Nanga — you know, like they get Nanga-bone from.

And the things we were told: A guide would point out across a small lake at a brown blob on the other side. "There's a moose drinking." Immediately the cry went up all down the line "A moose!"

I took a good look, and said to the guide "That's no moose." He grinned, shrugged, and said "But now everybody's happy."

Or once a guide pointed to a tree, saying that it was dead. It looked all right to me, but I figured he knew what he was talking about. Then he went on "Sure — it's one of those petrified ones, and you have to watch it doesn't fall on you." And Dan offered the information once that when I got home, I should hang all the clothes I have with me in the closet for a week, because if I washed them right away I'd never get the wood-smoke smell out of the machine. All said with a straight face.

But we got back at them the last night which was skit night. Everybody's contribution was hilarious, but I think what Alice and I topped with was all. It was "A Sincere Tribute to the Guides" describing all their sterling qualities. I sat up late the night before and wrote it all out by candlelight, working in as many incidents and idiosyncrasies as I could. I read a perfectly straight tribute while Alice and two other riders acted out the corresponding incidents. For example, when I praised the guides for their courtesy, the riders re-enacted Mike sending me flying by applying the flat of an axe to my posterior.

Alice was more than overjoyed to act the part of Mike and did it quite convincingly, even though her 5'2" was quite lost in the clothes borrowed from Mike who must have been at least 6'2". I coached Ann Carter of Salinas, California in the part of Dan — straightening his vest, tucking his chin down, looking up from under his hat brim and saying (by the way, he always seemed to be chasing his horse after it had either got loose from being tied or had trotted out from under him) "Steve, you round up those 35 horses while" pause, straighten, tuck — "I catch mine." And "Steve, you look after the 2 per cent of the folks who came to see the scenery and — Pause, straighten, tuck — "I'll start in on the other 98 per cent." I was watching Dan when that sentence came out and he just about fell through the side of the tent he laughed so hard.

During the week, there was no lack of excitement. Once the pack horse spooked as it was being loaded after a lunch stop and took



DAN DENNIS and Free Press columnist Wendy Thomson compete in the pack horse competition during the trail ride through the Rockies.

off along the bank and into the lake, losing everything it had been packed with. Dan had to go in on his horse to fish the boxes out, but some stuff sank and was lost.

At another stop, Mike's horse went down with colic and it was beginning to look as if he wasn't going to get up again. Luckily, on this ride there were four doctors, including a psychiatrist. By the time all the Docs (and a few quacks) had gone down to consult over it, the poor horse figured it had better get up and away from there before they decided to DO something.

Dan's horse kept going down for another reason. It was tied to a tree while the rest of the horses were left to roam, at stops. It kept trailing around till it got all tangled up and threw itself. Finally, as a discreet hint that it would be best to stay on its feet, Dan stepped up on its side and tromped up and down from head to tail and back again, three or four times. I wonder if it actually does work.

The one day I was sick and stayed in camp, I spent talking to Sheryl Walker, the cook, a pretty 23 year old from Northern Ontario. She does a tremendous job for someone with no training (other than being cook's helper for two years), whomping up breakfast of juice, eggs, bacon, and pancakes every morning, a picnic for lunch, then a huge supper. — Fried chicken, or stew, a swiss steak, ham, or the best barbecued roast of beef I've ever tasted, with soup, vegetables, salad and dessert — and always enough for 40 with just about everything done in a tent in a wood stove. I was really impressed.

There was only four things that marred an otherwise perfect week. First, my airmattress kept going down, and when the temperature went below freezing that ground was cold when I woke up! Second, while part of the idea of the ride had been to have a rest from my youngsters, there was one there about the same age as Beth, and I swear she hardly ever was silent. On one ride, she was right behind me, telling homemade jokes, singing songs, etc. I timed her, once and in a one hour period she didn't stop making noises for more than 15 seconds at a time. I kept hoping she'd catch a big black bug right in the yap and keep it shut for a while. But no such luck.

Third although I sat outside alone till midnight a couple of nights, just watching the trees against the sky, listening to the

sound of the river, and enjoying the hour in solitary, there were times when a married woman without her husband along, is out of place, and those were times of great loneliness. Gord and I could have out-polka'd everybody in the tent!

Lastly, I found I needed time to re-adjust to civilization after coming down from the mountains. Gord thought to surprise me by coming to pick me up right from the ride and scooting me back to Saskatchewan, to our kids and his family, right away. It doesn't work. Right now, as I write this last page, the day after coming down, civilization is grating, and quite a bit of my heart is still up in the mountains.

Signed, a full-fledged member of The Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies.

Free Press briefs

THE LIBRARY is closed till next Tuesday, for staff holidays.

A NEW ROOF is being put on part of the Robert Little school this week.

NO SIGN of the new portable classrooms here yet.

JUST OVER a week till the C.N.E. begins and a little over a month till fall fair.

BANK CONSTRUCTION continues, kitty-corner at Mill and Willow. Makes interesting watching.

GRAIN CROPS are good in the district in general. Combining will be underway soon.

CONSTRUCTION along No. 7 highway has completely changed the look of the area in some locations. Work is beginning on curbing just out side town this week.

THE SEVENTH LINE of Esquevas has new topping, and Ballinaduff villagers worry about speeders.

HEAVY AIR these humid days makes smells and pollens hang low and long. It's hard times for sensitive noses.



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Ladies' fair board plans for floats

Mrs. K. Alger was hostess Thursday evening Aug. 6 for the Acton ladies' fair board meeting. Mrs. W. Linham, the president, was in the chair and Mrs. Isabel McDonald, secretary treasurer, read the minutes of the last meeting and gave the financial report.

Spot lights for the ladies' hall exhibits were discussed and the ladies hall committee were to meet with the men's hall committee for further discussion. The float committee for the fair were chosen, Mrs. C. Altken, Mrs. S. Morrison, Mrs. K. Alger and Mrs. C. Storey with Mr. C. Storey assisting the ladies. Any member

with ideas for the float could get in touch with committee and will be greatly appreciated.

A cup of tea and refreshments was served by the hostess Mrs. K. Alger assisted by Mrs. W. Thompson and Mrs. S. Morrison, after which a very enjoyable social time was spent as the hostess had many items of interest for the ladies to admire. The next meeting will be announced later.

The Ontario Heart Foundation has free educational materials on high blood pressure. But remember, it takes two to treat it — you and your doctor.

Seek C.W.A.C.s

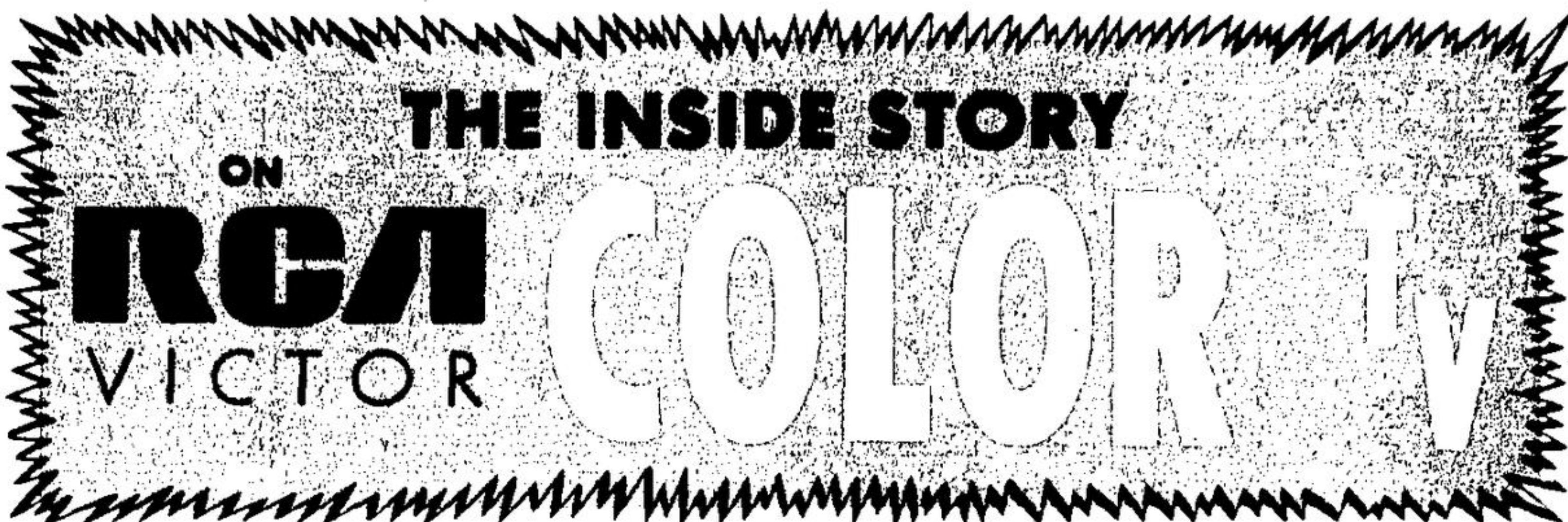
The Free Press has been asked to help locate C.W.A.C. "pals" from the service days of World War II. Their annual reunion is being held the last weekend in September in Toronto. Anyone interested? Write for brochure to Mrs. Shirley Wood Heesaker, 201 Niagara St., Toronto 139.

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RCA Engineers Were The First To Pioneer and Develop Color Television

1. July 1930 — RCA scientists start research in transmission and reception of color.
2. February 1947 — RCA scientists achieve breakthrough with first successful colorcast.
3. April 1947 — RCA publicly demonstrates Color TV.
4. June 1951 — RCA invites competing tube and set manufacturers to demonstration.
5. October 1953 — RCA offers basic color set design to engineers representing all TV set manufacturers.
6. March 1954 — Production of RCA color TV receivers begins.

AND READ WHY RCA IS NO. 1 IN COLOR TV

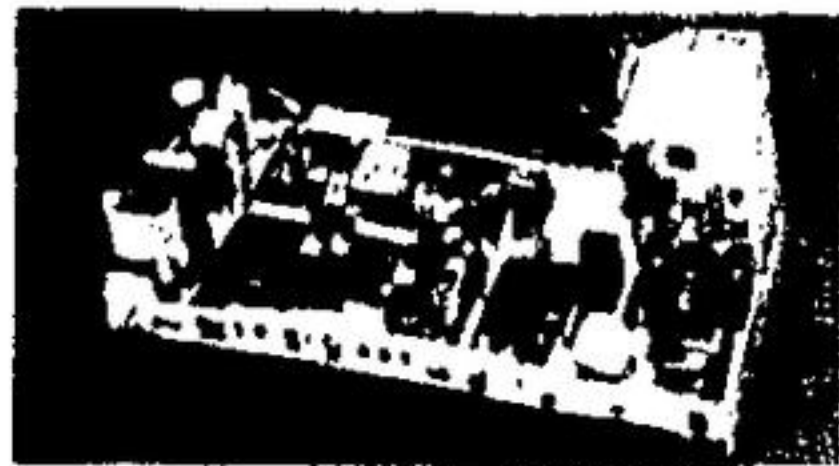
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| 1. January 1965 — RCA produces first Canadian Color TV sets. | 2. June 1966 — RCA introduces "Permachrome" Picture Tubes, Automatic Fine Tuning, Solid Integrated Circuits. | 3. March 1967 — RCA introduces first Super Bright Hi-Lite Picture Tube. | 4. June 1968 — RCA introduces Trans Vista Solid State Color TV. |
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