

Tells of 25,000 Mile Trip Across U. S. to Alaskan Wilds

Following is a continuation of the round robin letters sent to friends by Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Patton, on their 25,000 mile trailer trip to Alaska.

Several gorgeous days followed before the deluge in the temperature. It was so hot at noon that I stripped to the waist to keep cool. Sue took off her flannel shirt. The river wound around bed after bed, ever getting wider, strange as it may seem. The current was very swift so we kept to slack water as much as possible trying to dodge the bars but frequently landing squarely aground, whereupon Mike and I would grab the poles and push and rock and swear and perspire until finally we had coaxed the boat into deep water again, perhaps 1/4 mile from where we had gone aground. You know the kicker didn't always start when wanted.

Day followed day with about three beautiful sunny ones, before the rains. We were gone 42 days and it rained or drizzled 30 of them. Each night going up we picked out a nice bar, where the bugs were absent, (we hoped) pitched our tents and ate a diner t for kings. Sue was the cook and will testify to any healthy appetites.

One night I busted my axe handle and after supper went back into the timber to find some birch to whittle out a new one. I struck a dry grassy, slough with no brush and was walking along not making a sound. I heard barking and thinking some coyotes were chasing a moose stepped back to see them cross the slough. All I had with me was my axe with a broken handle but as I was near camp and not looking for meat, a gun was unnecessary. Soon a big black head protruded around a clump of willows and looked at me not 20 feet away. More yapping from a pair of cubs, at Ma Bears heels and I decided that instead of being favored guest to Ma Bear, she might be wondering what flavor my bones possessed. It seemed wise, all things considered to discuss the matter with her, from perhaps a little

further away so I turned tail and ran and boy how I ran down that slough, breaking all records for short distance sprinting. I wasn't even curious enough to look around to see if she was impressed by my speed.

After 16 days bucking the current we reached the lake which is a group of big boys all tied together, about 12 miles long in most any direction. The Pacific Alaska Airways maintain a radio weather station there manned by a young fellow from Baltimore and his bride from Bethel, Alaska. She sure was an attractive and smart girl with a touch of Eskimo mixed with the Indian.

We made permanent camp about a mile from the station directly facing the Alaska Range, Lord what a marvelous sight.

Our camp was located on a nice sandy beach protected on three sides from the weather. We rustled a table from a nearby deserted cabin and as we ate our meals out of doors on clear days, there was McKinley with its glistening white sides rising straight up from the Virgin forests. On either side stretched other precipitous peaks all capped with snow as far as you could see. At sundown the snow turned to all shades of red and gold with the valleys casting deeper toned shadows. I don't know where I have seen a more glorious panorama, with this magnificent range looming up sheer and bold across the quiet waters of Lake Minchumina.

We were 15 days on the lake, exploring the surrounding country, visiting the five trappers at their main camps and trying to get pictures. One of the trappers came from Crystal Lake and knew all about Highland Park. It rained off and on most every day, with the water in the lake rising three feet. In fact toward the end of our stay we wondered, whether there would be any beach left, it came up to the front guy rope of the big tent and with rough water the waves washed even closer.

Our grub was running low although we had supplemented it with fish, flesh and fowl so we pulled up stakes reluctantly for our homeward trek. As we left the lake thousands upon thousands of ducks rose, first widgeon and as we got away from the lake, mallards. The sky was black with birds near and far, so much so that Dick remarked "guess we will have to shoot our way through." I have never seen such a sight. The birds were not particularly wild, some of them just staying on the water as we chugged by. I got a lot of movies of them.

As we worked down stream we passed by little houses or caches resting about eight feet from the ground in which all provisions and space equipment is kept, first on account of fire to the main cabin, second the bears have an unpleasant habit of not waiting for an invitation to visit your cabin when you are not there and they don't always leave things in the neat order they find them.

As we got down to the mouth we ran out of cigarettes, tobacco, etc. However, fortunate we ran into an Indian family camped along the bank, where we rustled a couple of packs of Luckies. They had just killed two moose and wanted us to take some meat down to the young lady in the picture. In life she was oh so thin and hungry looking and while young, rather peaked and frail looking. Her husband was a great "sitter" so she was a great "dieter." Nevertheless she screens well.

Back safe and sound to Nenana after 42 days under canvas in all

kinds of weather. As we were over due the people in Nenana were worried over us until they were able to get a radio through to the lake and a reply saying we had arrived and left in good health. It was a glorious trip, with marvelous vi staa. Particularly fascinating were the evenings when across the river "A skyline of spruce" stood out jagged and tall against the colors of the sunset or starlight. The spruce grow tall and slender and are outlined against the sky as solitary spires one after another. We sure had a touch of the wilderness.

We were a week in Nenana cleaning up our equipment and finding out the mail contract to carry mail 75 miles across country by dog sled and I am planning to go down in December and take that trip with him. He uses 17 dogs. I have suggested that Sue go along, but she seems to prefer to stoke the furnace here in Fairbanks to breathing in the invigorating atmosphere of perhaps minus 60. She is getting a reindeer parki, trimmed with wolverine, but even that won't induce her to go. Strange isn't it?

You now know of our travels to date, so ta-ta for now.

Bob, Sue, Dick.

"Hats Off" to Three Members of Creative Writing Group

The December meeting of the Creative Writing Group sponsored by the Education Department of the Y.W.C.A. was a special celebration in honor of the "off press" news of three members of the group.

"Fun Without Pay", a sophisticated little green volume of verse by Mrs. H. J. Bligh known to many readers of "The Line" as Buddy Bligh, was reviewed for the class. Verses bemoaning "Life Begins at Forty (to grow a bit dull)", how the 3-way mirror deflates a woman's ego, problems of the suburban house-keeper, on movie lovers who block one's view, lines with such clever balance as "I'm writing to Roosevelt, To tell him the woes felt," the amusing title of "A Very Sad Lady Talks to Herself," applied to a prospective grandmother who had hoped to keep up the illusion of youth, were among the specially appreciated bits. A Christmas Wish verse included on separate sheet made the volume a particularly timely publication.

Everyone was reminded to read "Best of All—the Family Christmas Tree" by Hazel Cedarborg in the December issue of "American Home." Mrs. Cedarborg's article was regarded as so full of the Christmas spirit that the editor honored it by quoting "Christmas again! The most joyous, the tenderest, the most significant of all Christmas festivals. Mistletoe and holly, Christmas carols and blazing hearths with-in, cheery candles for those without. Christmas greetings and Christmas presents, but best of all—the Christmas tree . . . Because it is the focal point of the season's festivities, the tree should receive more attention

than it does. It isn't enough that one should jump in the car a night or two before Christmas Eve and pick up a tree at the nearest filling station or grocery store, and then dash into the five-and-ten just before closing time and take what is left in the way of ornaments. The Christmas tree should be a matter of more moment. It should be planned with care, a co-operative family enterprise in which the youngest and the oldest have a part." In her article Mrs. Cedarborg gives practical ways to share the tree's decoration.

Members of the group with piano playing daughters or granddaughters on their list were interested in seeing Rowena Bennett's verses for "4 and 20 Melodies" by Berenice Benson Bentley, former Ravinia resident. As the foreword says "The composer feels that the verses by Rowena Bennett and the illustrations by Phillip Leigh Holliday will stim-

ulate the imagination of the child and help in no small degree in the interpretation of the compositions." Mrs. Bennett shares verse honors with Mother Goose but we feel the latter will be considered a minor contributor when Mrs. Bennett writes of butterflies whose tea tables are flowerbeds set with white lily cups, and pansy plants blue. And for those who do not know this Bennett children's classic it is worth sharing:

Two turtle doves sat in a tree,
They liked each other's company.
They both were friendly little birds
And talked with softly cooing words.
One said "The sky is very blue."
The other answered "True, too true."

This book of piano compositions is just one of the volumes appearing this year in which the name of the leader of the Creative Writing Group is featured. The class will resume its Thursday morning sessions, open to new members after the holidays and vacation.

War Veterans Will Hear Xmas Program

A very delightful program was arranged by Mrs. Richard Mansell and Mrs. Erastus Phelps for the patients at Great Lakes hospital last Friday. The Musart club, accompanied by Mrs. Leslie Hawley, sang a group of Christmas carols. A quartet of violins presented several selections and accompanied the singing group. The quartet which is directed by Helen Mayer Mannings, consists of Lorraine Weaver, Rollin Hoermann and James Krohn.

At the conclusion of this delightful program, the chorus sang "God Bless America." Magazines and cigarettes were distributed to the men.

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