

THE ALL-WALDENSTON EXPEDITION

Tuesday, August 21st, 1956

The week of the big pack-trip is approaching. Bill and I stopped in to see Fred Abercrombie in Jackson this morning and all our duffel has to be at Warm Springs Ranch not later than Wednesday afternoon.

Bill, Ruth, Jim and Dorrie scurried about town buying blue-jeans, moccasins, and presents for the boys back home; then we drove to Moose where the group suffered the first great disappointment of the "Big-Two-Weeks" -- the bar is completely and irretrievably out of Jack Daniels! After assuaging our sorrow and our thirst in beer and a sample of "old yellow" we stocked up on the latter, and an extra pack animal has been added to the string.

Wednesday, August 22nd

Great has been the activity this morning. The men have oiled the saddles -- seen to the rods and tackle, rolled up the air-mattresses and sleeping bags, and outfitted their fishing vests while we girls have packed the duffel-bags, washed our hair, and run around seeking lost articles. It is a heavenly day and we hope that we will be blessed with weather like this all next week.

Friday, August 24th, 5:30 a.m.

"All aboard for Pacific Creek, Bridger Lake, Mariposa and all points North" -- This rendered in a loud voice by Big Dad woke us up on the morning of the start of the Big Week. Anna and Ray gave us a good breakfast at 6:30 and we met the Abercrombies - Fred, Lila, and Helen-Ann, age 10, in their big truck with a horse traveling along. At Moose, at 7:30, Puss and Stella, those truly great Woodland Fairies, went along with us over a very bumpy road to Pacific Creek -- Here we saddled - I on spider, who is black as a cloudy night - and a good steed - and we started off for our first camp site - Gravel Lake. The trail was dusty at first but soon we were riding thru lofty trees and woodland flowers. A sandwich at noon pepped us up for the three hour ride to camp where we found Lorrie and Bob, the cooks, all set up - also five tents - 2 large and 3 tepee-type, Ray, the wrangler, and Sonny the helper and guide.

After elk-salami and cheese sandwiches we donned our rubber boots and were off to the lake where we caught our dinner; and were those fish good! After a short chat around the big fire, we all crawled into our warm sleeping bags - Jim and Dorrie sleeping out in the open.

Saturday, August 25th

"It's 5:20 and I'm getting up," said The Big. "Get back in there" said I, "no one's up yet" - But off he went and I heard giggles from the tent next door, so looked at my watch which said 6:30... one disappointed Big!

Bob gave us a delicious breakfast of cakes, eggs so fresh I asked where he kept the hens, orange juice, and, of course, java, the old eye-opener.

At 8:30 the 6 B's and 3 Abercrombies started off for Fox Park, a beautiful ride thru garden meadows carpeted with fall flowers -- more than we expected as everything is very dry, but the heavy snows of last winter have kept the earth moist.

A stop for sandwiches at the Snake (Wolverine Creek) helped us complete the ride of seven miles and we reached our camp site at 1 o'clock... the pack train following three hours later. There are 13 of us people -- our lucky number - and 23 horses. We were on the Snake and everyone caught small fish. (My one catch was the largest, I must report in all modesty.)

Good old J.D. - or substitute thereof -- whetted our appetites for a delicious dinner -- then campfire conversation and to bed. Bill's back has bothered him a bit so he was in bed at 8..... the rest of us at 9.

Sunday, August 26th

'Twas a cold night, but we all survived, I being the cow's tail at breakfast -- and did that coffee and big campfire feel good! Robber jays are screaming in the trees, and it is overcast and trying to rain. Everyone is in good humor the horses have been wrangled in, lynch bags and beer packed in the saddle bags and we will soon be off.

We travelled along Mink Creek which runs into the Snake... then Falcon Creek which runs into the Yellowstone, the Continental Divide, dividing the two streams. We had alternate sun and cloud and the trail was beautiful. We saw an enormous elk feeding on a high meadow and rode thru fields of blue gentian. We reached Bridger Lake at two o'clock and threw our flies in with real success. The pack train came in at four and the whole camp was set up in about an hour: our green tent opening onto the Lake, with Bill and Ruth's and Jim and Dorrie's just below us. The cook's tent is above, as are the Abercrombies, Ray and Sonny - 7 tents in all, and we make a pretty picture.

THE ALL BALDWINSTON EXPEDITION (CONT'D)

While we were eating our dinner, five moose came out of the woods across the lake, one swimming half way across, to entertain us.

Bob fries fish to perfection, and the salads are so good. We also enjoy our O.F. before dinner and have a lot of fun around the camp-fire. Big Dad, watching the moose out in the lake, opined that he "was quite a swimmer - and even was good at treading water". We all turned in early, and for the first night, with our bags zipped together. I slept warm - wonderful!

Monday, August 27th

Lowering skies greeted us this morning, also coyotes howling and ducks quacking. Bill, Sr. was up early as usual and off with his amera, reporting on his return at breakfast time that he had shot 100' of film on the Trumpeter Swans. He also reported that he had had to throw a stone at them to get them to rise. Good thing Bill Daniels - the local ranger, didn't see him.

The six of us with Sonny Criss guiding left camp on horseback about 10 a.m., heading for the fork of the Thoroughfare and the Yellowstone Rivers where Curt Winsor had told us the fish were large and hungry. We followed his map -- a longer ride than we anticipated - and finally reached the spot, all of us half frozen as the clouds and fog had descended, the wind whistled, and there were flakes of snow in the air. We all wore high rubber boots so our feet were warm, but our hands were numb and like ice. Undaunted, we strung up our rods - some with dry and others with wet flies and sallied forth.

Bill, Jr. caught the first one - a big fat cut-throat weighing about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - then Ruth got the next one, and we caught 8 in all - I believe, good-sized fighters and fun to hook.

A sandwich by a fire helped warm us and we fished again until 3:30 - then with real cold descending upon us, we started for camp. To our amazement, the surrounding mountains were all white with snow and that big camp-fire really warmed our spirits as well as our hands and feet. Fred had rigged up a canvas shelter of sorts near the fire and there we ate our dinner, singing a few songs to cheer our only slightly lagging spirits, and with hot stones to warm our damp sleeping bags, crawled in.

P.S. Bill, Jim and Sonny spent considerable time and effort in the morning rigging up a W.C. They even blazed the trees along the trail -- really necessary as it is at least 1 1/2 miles from home base!

THE ALL-BALDERSTON EXPEDITION (CONT'D)

Tuesday, August 28th

It snowed and rained all night! I think we all kept warm. I know I did, and from now on, it's hot rocks for me -- Bill's nice and warm, too. There is snow on all the surrounding mountains -- really beautiful, but it keeps raining in a most discouraging way. Bill Daniels rode into camp at breakfast and says it will clear by afternoon. Here's hoping!

As I write, I see five moose across the lake, a bull, two cows and two small lightish brown calves -- one of the families just swam across the lake.

Bill is out in the black boat with Helen-Ann and the four young B's are in the bigger yellow boat. We've requested fish-chowder for dinner. Bridger Lake is truly beautiful with mountains and forest and meadow. Where else in the world could one go to the edge of the lake to fish and see moose either 50' away or across the lake, horses feeding in the lush yellow grass at the West end, Trumpeter Swans sailing side by side in the blue water, and duck families paddling along in a straight row. I just wish I could say the sun were shining warm and bright, but the wind is coming up and it's raw and C O L D !

After lunch we got our fishing gear and our courage together and rode ^{to a spot} in the meadows which Curt had also told us about, and we weren't disappointed. They were all big ones... honest Injun, and only a real whopper -- nearly 4# -- that Bill, Jr. caught, and one other for luck -- were brought back to home base. The rest were let go for some other excited angler. The sun managed to come out to warm us a little, but the most fun was watching little Dorrie casting a big wiggly frog into the stream. Bill had put it on for her and I think she wiggled more than the frogie. Unfortunately, it didn't produce the results hoped for.

Most delicious fish-chowder was waiting for us when we returned. O.F.'s first, of course, made with Big Dad's loving and expert hands, and relished by all. Of course, the "4 drops of Bitters story" which grows better with each telling, has been appreciated equally by those who have heard it often and those who listened for the first time.

Rudie has had frequent encounters with moose in and around camp, and yesterday on her way to the meadow's fishing spot, bogged down in the mud to the top of her hip-boots -- frightening! She is our adventure girl.

But to get back to dinner -- our cook produces marvels -- that fish-chowder was O - O - T - W -- and the fried apple and raisin pies couldn't be bettered by Pierre of the Waldorf -- and how we eat!

THE ALL-SALMONS EXPEDITION

Wednesday, August 29th

Our tooth-water was frozen solid in the cup outside our tent this morning, and it was hard to struggle out of our warm bags.

Around 10:30, Bill, Dorrie, Jim, Bill, Sr., and I started off for a fishing hole in the Yellowstone with Sonny, our guide. It was overcast and became more so as we rode out into the meadow and the cold, COLD wind blew a gale. What we would do without plastic raincoats, I don't know. They roll up easily and neatly to pack behind a saddle and keep the warmth in when wintry winds blow or rain falls.

The fishing holes were all anyone could ask for and Bill and Jim had particularly good luck. Ruddy, who wisely stayed home for a day of rest, met us upon our return looking fresh and clean. We envied her!

Another jolly time around a big fire.. a stimulating drink, and good dinner -- then to bed.

Thursday, August 30th

Moving day, and we all hate to leave beautiful Bridger Lake. The procedure is for us dules -- (I know that's what the A's consider us -- though we really feel like oldtimers -- and the Big truly is one --) to let the air out of our mattresses, pack our duffle-bags, roll up our bed-rolls, tie our raincoats and perhaps an extra sweater on the backs of our saddles, stow our lunches in the saddle bags -- and are off with a guide. Today, our guide is Fred, himself, with Lila and H.A., and we leave the rest of the crew to pack up and follow us about 2 hours later.

We left Bridger about 9:30 headed for Fred's hunting camp on the Buffalo River, and what a ride we had. We hadn't been gone long before it began to snow.... at first dry small flakes -- then large wet ones, and it really came down! We ate our lunch around a fire at Two Ocean Pass where Bill Daniels and his young fire-watcher passed us stopping to chat for a few minutes. They were headed for Enos Lake.

On we went in the swirling snow, our hands wet and cold and our toes numb. The horses hoofs began to ball up and we did some rather alarming sliding about. "Keep your feet light in your stirrups", called out Fred, "so you can jump if you have to" -- but, fortunately, no one had to.

We reached our destination about two o'clock and a wetter place would be hard to imagine. It wasn't long, however, before we had a good fire going and soon Bill and Jim were casting in the Buffalo, a most beautiful river, completely unspoiled by civilization. Walking down stream with flowers blooming among the deadfalls and rocks, one could feel that he was the only one who had ever been there.

I found grass of Parnasus and picked a bunch of flowers to put in a tin can on our table ... Bill was waiting, camera in hand, to get a good picture of the pack-train as they came in about five o'clock - across the river. It had stopped snowing by now, though it was still overcast. We noticed as they approached, Sonny leading -- that Ray, Lorrie and Bob were not following, and then we heard the bad news that Lorrie's leg had been broken by the vicious kick of a loose pack-horse. She, Bob, and Ray were back on the trail in the wet and cold, and the only thing to do was to get her down to Turpin Meadows that night. Lila went off on her white horse (she is such an excellent horsewoman) with morphine and whisky -- and Fred followed to see what assistance he could give. We heard later that it took ten agonizing hours in the dark to get down, and both Ray and Sonny told us in moving words of Lorrie's courage. "Sand" was the descriptive word they used most often.

We six and H.A. were all saddened and shaken by this unfortunate accident, but there was work to do. The pack-animals had to be relieved of their loads and pack-saddles... then let loose to graze. Tents had to be put up, fires kept going, dinner to prepare. Everyone pitched in and soon the place was humming. Fred returned about 8 o'clock and we finally turned in about 9... all thinking of poor Lorrie and hoping that the break wasn't too serious.

Friday, August 31st

"Shall I use all these eggs?" questioned Dorrie.
"I'll cut that left-over ham up to go into them," said The Big.
"Isn't that coffee awfully strong?" "I'd better make more", said Muffie.
"I'll use this grille and we'll have toast" cried Ruth. "I can't get my boots on" wailed Helen-Ann. "Here's more wood."
"Here's a fresh pail of water", chorused the Bothersome Boys.. and so we got breakfast in spite of a few left-over dishes frozen in the dishpan, our center-piece of flowers glistening with frost and our breaths coming out like clouds of fog.

'Twas a glorious morning...not a cloud in the sky. Before noon, we shed our sweaters. Ray and Sonny returned to camp around noon and gave us the good news that Lorrie's break was not too serious and that she was resting comfortably in the hospital in Jackson under Dr. McCleod's competent care.

We saw a big black bear running thru a golden meadow on our way home. We have seen deer too.. a little fawn peering out at us from its nest under a tree.. one coyote .. tho we heard many.. and two elk high in a mountain grazing spot. We didn't even count the moose, there were so many.

Our ride to Turpin Meadows took about five hours, and at one point Jim, who has been pretty "shook-up" over the riding, called out to the "Big" - "What did my horse do then?" "He went into a lope", said his father. "That was great", said Jim. "I never knew a horse could do that - why didn't you tell me about this before". "Let's lope all the way".

THE ALL-BALDERSTON EXPEDITION (CONT'D)

At Turpin Meadows we said farewell to the Abercrombies who made this great trip so comfortable and enjoyable for us all. We hope that it won't be long before we can all be together for another adventure into a Wilderness Area.

"Sky" looked mighty grand to six slightly weary and very dirty but experienced oldtimers.

What a great time we have had together! We are a fortunate family and for many years to come we will recall with nostalgia and happiness the wonderful hours spent together on The All-Balderston Expedition.

P.S. On Saturday we went to Jackson Hospital -- St. John's - where we saw Lorrie and Bob Bingham. Lorrie was cheery and bright.... a courageous girl if ever there was one. She has the good wishes of everyone of us and the hope that all goes well with the broken leg.

-- HEARD OFTEN AROUND CAMP --

Dad - "Come and get it or I'll throw it in the lake".
Fred - "Those four drops of bitters!"
Lila - "How's everybody this morning?"
Bill - "What's the matter with this horse?"
Ruth - "Are there any Moose down there?"
Jim - "Giddy-Giddy go!"
Dorrie - "Oh, my hair!"
Lorrie - "Coffee's ready"
Bob - "I fry them in deep fat"
Helen-Ann - "Wayone - Tapoo - Thrapee - Fapour!"
Sonny - "I know a good hole on the Yellowstone"
Ray - "That Mat Ridgeway sure was a character -- old Hemingway, too."
Muffee - "I just couldn't get my back warm."