

C O P Y

ARIZONA BUS COMPANY

Prescott - Jerome  
Passenger and freight service

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

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Dear Will and Fred:

Late last night we got back from the White Mountains, and before the edge is off and I get settled down to work, I believe I would like to tell you fellows about it. As whatever interest you two may have in it is so nearly identical I am doing it in duplicate.

The mileage on the car totaled up a shade over 800 miles and I can't find I begrudge a smidge of it. We were out just two weeks to a day, and it was the most gorgeous journey I have ever made, and I have been on several.

We saw about every kind of wild life there is except bear and boar, and we finally came across one of each of these in a cage where they had been penned up after being recently caught by the natives. I never saw anyone get a greater jolt out of being close to nature in the raw than the youngsters and their mother did out of this. We had our thrills and adventures and close calls, but we came through without a mishap, all well and tremendously satisfied.

Permanent camp was established at a place on the map called Espero, which is Spanish for "hope" or "expectation". I say it is called that on the map because there is nothing else to identify it except the dot and the name. It is more than a hundred miles from the nearest railroad and forty miles from any base of supplies, so we had to outfit completely before we went in. If we had not run clean out of grub it is possible we might have stayed another week. We thought we had plenty, but it developed that we got away with about a half more than we do at home so we ran short before we had calculated we would. Lord, how that small family did eat.

Besides ourselves there was no one else in Espero except the post-mistress and her husband, who lived on a 320 acre mountain homestead that had been formed by a beaver dam possibly some centuries ago. It was a nice place, the whole of it being planted to oats, which gave promise of making a bountiful crop. We liked it because it wasn't badly crowded with folks. Our camp was across this oat field from the house and was by one on the finest springs I have ever seen.

Because it is so easy to get lost in the White Mountains and because so many have been lost in them, we were a mite chary of circulating about much for the first couple of days. We did, though, go down Beaver Creek Canyon to Black River, figuring that we could not fail to get back the way we came. About half way down we came upon a beaver dam in active operation. I had seen many of these as defunct institutions, but this was the first I had seen as a going concern. It was about 60 feet

long and something like 30 feet high and was still under construction as the freshly cut logs clearly showed. The largest tree I found cut for the dam measured full ten inches through and was all neatly logged up in six to ten foot lengths, just as though an axeman had been at it. Some of the chips from the logging operations were as much as six inches in length-all mighty fascinating. These log lengths were being evidently floated down the pond and were being tilted on end to support the downstream side and carefully plastered over with mud. All the evidence was there, but of course we did not see the beaver at work.

After we had inspected the dam we went on down to the river and got enough fish for breakfast and then hurried home to make sure of being back before dark. Around the camp fire that night I asked Patterson, our host, if it were possible to see the beaver actually at work and he said it was possible but not likely, for they only came out at night, but with a good moon it made a pretty sight. Then we dropped the matter. But the next evening I casually suggested that we go back down in the canyon and watch the beaver. Much to my amazement the whole bunch was strong for the proposition and we set out. At the dam we made a cache for Frances and her mother and left them to watch, while Jeb and I went on down to the river again to fish. He and I stayed till almost dark and expected that the girls would get tired and go back to camp, but when we neared the dam we saw them motioning for us to keep quiet, so we sneaked around and joined them and found they had been watching beaver for an hour. It was pretty dark, but we could still see the foxy fellows floating down their logs and piling them against the dam. Interesting as it was, we still had a long climb out of the canyon and I drove at them till I got them started and we made it all right by a pale moon. Patterson told us next day he was plumb uneasy all evening until he saw our camp fire light up across the field long after it should have been gleaming and he then knew we must be all right. He was about ready to start out to look for us, and when we told him we had actually seen the beaver he pretended to be full of admiration, for he said of some thousand or so folks he had toted around those hills we were the first not native to the country that had ever seen those paddle tails on the job. On a stunt like that I am always thinking of a possible badly strained ankle or something of that sort to make getting out of a canyon at night an unhandy sort of thing, but we made it and every one of us got a great joy from it. I doubt if it is at all to be recommended until it is safely over.

As a means of quick orientation we now hired saddle horses and Patterson as a guide and took a ten mile jaunt down Black River. This tickled Frances pink, for she sure loves a horse; but strange or otherwise, Jeb likes them not. Show him an airplane and he is wild, but no horse for him. Boys seem to be getting that way. We were out about an hour when Patterson whistled and turned in his saddle and pointed up the side of the canyon. There was the prettiest bunch of wild turkey you would want to see. The guide said they were a flock of year old gobblers and I took his word for it, but anyhow they were nice to see - not a lot different from any other turks, but there was something about the wild birds whenever we saw them that was stirring. Every morning a little after daylight they would edge out of the timber and skirt along the oat field and then scurry away again. I sure like turkey. I asked Pat how the shooting was after the season opened on October 1st, and he said it was sure meat for the first three or four

days and then the birds got wise and it was all off, but you were practically certain of a gobbler the day it opened.

Black River Canyon was truly beautiful, but the fishing was not prime, though we got enough to eat. The fishing is best in June, as we well knew, but the trout were surely delicious, though hard enough to snare. Jeb did very well at it, hopping from rock to rock like a water ouzel and yanking them off the riffle pools, catching a half-dozen to my one. When I did try to make the rocks I mostly missed and got more than one good ducking, but it was all in the game, except that to be wet in the mountains is not joyous, because it is cold as the mischief up there. We slept under four or five blankets and still had to keep snuggled down to be warm. Why we never took cold, I do not know. We would have at home, but we seemed to thrive on it and felt bully the whole time. Our camp was at 8,700 feet elevation, so it had a right to be cool.

And the next day it rained. Golly, how persistently it did rain. But we were fixed for it with a good fly over the roof and another for a porch so we were cosy as could be and after the long horseback ride were content to lazy about camp and let it pour. We took along a gasoline camp stove for just such a situation, but as I detest the things and with the forest full of wood and gas at the mountain price of 50¢ a gallon it seemed a crime, so I set about to prove it needless. I gathered some sound pine knots and built a fire just beyond the porch fly, so I could still be sheltered and look after the chuck. The rain was lively, but it could not compete with the pitch pine. We got a chicken at the ranch and had a sumtuous dinner cooked in the rain and the damned gas stove did not have a match touched to it the entire trip.

When the sun finally came out we went botanizing as a diversion. I had learned that a wild flower lover had been in there and listed 83 attractive species. We undertook to see how many we could find within a hundred yards of camp and set down an even 60 before we quit. The meadows were veritable gardens of blossoms, and I have never seen a flower, tame or wild, that will top the mountain columbine when it is in its prime. There were acres of braken which were mighty attractive and decorative under the groves of silver spruce. The mountains are rarely beautiful in August.

Next morning Mts. Patterson piloted us up to the head of the Coronado Trail. This is the Forest Service Highway that follows the trail old Coronado is supposed to have taken when he was searching for the Seven Cities of Cibola. There is a monument marking it at the summit of 10,000 feet and from there it seemed that you could see over about half the world. The highway is one of the best I have ever seen, in a perfect natural formation that you can skin along in the car in high most all the way with grades and curves of engineering close to perfection. I look for it to be one of the classic scenic routes of America when it becomes known. The spruce thickets along it are especially attractive and it is worth anyone making the effort from the beaten track to see. Funny thing, with the thousands of acres of flowers, Mrs. Patterson, a well educated woman and with a good deal of character, inveighed against the practise of tourists of picking the blossoms and destroying the seed plants. They want to keep the roadsides blooming

as they are, those that live among the wild things. It is the furriners that are the destroyers as always.

The flour and bacon was getting low, but we wanted another day of fishing, so we started out on foot across country, this time without a guide, for the waters of Black River where we had not yet whipped. A mile or so from camp someone caught sight of a deer and we stepped behind a big tree to watch. Up the trail out of a hollow came an old doe sniffing the wind. She knew something was up because she whisked about and took her stance between two pines with her big ears outlined against the sky, the largest female deer I ever saw, fat and silky skinned. She stood there quite a spell, seeming to be trying to find what was on the air. Then up the trail single file came the rest of the herd. We counted them one by one until 12 more had passed, making 13 in all. By this time the old boss knew what was amiss and seemed to be out on sentinal duty for the rest. I took careful stock and found that there were 9 of them five point bucks with horns in the velvet. One other was a younger male, and two of them were young does. They marched by in perfect order, casting furtive glances in our direction like soldiers will sometimes do. Then they broke into a jog trot until they reached the undergrowth and as soon as they got to it and safety they scattered in every direction, leaping the brush and swaying in and out in a way that was pretty to see. When they were gone, to make sure how near we had been to them I stepped the distance to the trail and found it to be 70 natural paces. Anyway it was as close as we had any right to be and near enough to see every one of them well enough. Not being familiar with their habits I wondered why this lot of bucks was being led by the old doe, and why those with horns were so thin and scrawny and seedy looking, while the does were so sleek. I thought maybe it was because the males were growing their antlers which were all in the velvet and that they would fat up and sleek off after the process was over. We saw a lot of other deer by two and threes at a distance. They came down to lick salt every morning while Pat was milking the cows; but this was the choicest lot we came across and I wouldn't have missed the picture for a good deal. Strange how much more taking it is to see game in the natural setting than caged up in a zoo.

A little further on we came to a bevy of Fool Quail. I had never seen or heard of these before. They are said to be confined to this region, though I doubt that. They look like a cross between mountain quail and the Bob White and get their name from being so dumb. This covey fluttered about on the ground like they were loco, but they kept just out of reach, so I wondered if they were so stupid as they looked, but a pot hunter would have easily made short shrift of them. Pat said he had often reached out and stroked them with a fishing rod and they made no effort to get away. They are pretty things, but seem to deserve their name. We had the best fishing of all that day and the trout were just nice size to curl neatly in the pan. We learned how to cook trout and to eat them. I am not barking much about the fishing, but they were good when we got them and showed that they would be there in plenty at the right season. I would dearly like to go back in June. There are 350 miles of trout streams in the White Mountains. It is quite a way to go from here just to wet a fly, but withall that goes with it I count it worth while.

Next day we started home. Bent on not retracing our route we

took off from Springerville to McNarry, which is said to be the biggest white pine lumber camp in the world. It looked it, but I don't find them very enticing. The labor was mostly colored from Louisiana. McNarry, by the way, was a business acquaintance of Ed Hazzards at Lake Charles. The country there was just lately been opened up with a stub of a railroad from Holbrook.

I had always wanted to see the Mogollon Rim (pronounced Mugione) and I learned there was a dim trail that would get you down it by way of Show Low, so we took off there cross country, which was a wild chance for there was the only one settlement of a few houses in the next 150 miles. We missed the road into Payson and camped all night on top. I don't know how high it was but it was enough. There was a storm raging in the valley and we could look down on the clouds that now and then would lift and go bumping around camp like Paul Bunyan's footballs. It was sixty miles we learned later to the nearest habitation, and the stillest place I have ever been in. All night I found myself speculating on the possibility of something happening to the canteens for there was no water on the plateau and we did not know where it was to be found anywhere else.

When we got off the rim we learned from a little sawmill owner that we were nearer home by Roosevelt dam than to climb the rim again and look for the road we were after, so we came back over the Globe Fossil Creek Highway, which was a lucky mistake after all, because we had always wanted to see Roosevelt Lake. It was a ratty looking place with low water and the most disappointing thing on the trip, resembling an exaggerated frog pond and smelling eloquently like one.

We got stuck in the Verde River fording in high water with a wet distributor, but we later made it all right and reached home smack on the two weeks schedule that our vacation called for. I knew I would write a book if I ever started a letter about it, but it had to be. I couldn't hold it.

There was hardly over a couple of hundred miles out of the 800 that we were out of the timber and most of it was in the shade of the pines. Most of the bare road was the hundred miles between Holbrook and Flagstaff that I always cuss even on a train, and if either of you fellows ever drive out here (which I don't count on you ever doing until I hear you are on your way) I would suggest that you strike off from the Old Trails near the Eastern line of the State and come over a more interesting country. You know that is the largest body of uncut virgin white pine left in America. It runs unbroken for nearly 400 miles and it peeves us plenty to have everyone in the east hold that Arizona is short on trees. I once thought so myself, but no longer.

when I got home I found Fred's letter waiting me. He asks when is the best time for a vacation in Arizona and I would reply that the best time is whenever you find it possible to come. You can get any climate you choose at any time of year. But my favorite month is June before the summer rains start and after it has begun to get a little temperate in the high hills. It will still be cool enough even then.

As to politics, the colored gentlemen that Fred mentions in connection with my campaign says I should have been working instead of going

fishing, but I would rather have had this vacation than go to the Legislature, though I would prefer both. Naturally I want to be elected, but the Ethiopian is fretting a heap more than I am, and I hope it will be the same after the votes are counted. There are lots of things I hanker after more than I do a political career, which I know is not the proper attitude, but I can't seem to help it. They say I will be defeated, but I am going to make the scrap and then we shall see what we shall see.

And this reminds me that vacation is over and I must tie into work

Your affectionate brother

Paul E. Lodge