

Back Country Exploration

This is the story of the trip Dolly, Ben and Max took this past weekend. It's written, principally, to fill columns otherwise taken by the jottings of Kathryn, Edith and Shirley, all of whom have gone their various ways, simultaneously, thereby cutting off those delectable bits which usually fill this space.

D. and B. and M. took off suddenly Saturday afternoon in B's experienced jeep station wagon, laden with bedrolls, chuck coffee and water, headed for a bit of rough country they'd often mulled over in their minds.

To the Smith River cut-off, then and then further along 197 thence to supper at Cave Junction where a sign on the left says something about "Tennessee." In

flushing a spiked buck, confused in the headlights' glare; crossing the beautiful new steel Bailey bridge, spanning the Illinois, turn sharp right, down onto the protected sandy bench where there are fireplaces, and bedding down for the night, long after dark, something no experienced campers-out should or would ever do! (By all means go into camp in daylight!)

What a sleep! Up at crack of dawn (just a fringe of pink back of Eight Dollar Mountain) coffee, breakfast (lacking only a hotcake turner) bundles bundled, (and all the time regretting the forgotten soap) and off up the gulch, headed in the general direction of the east bank of the extreme upper Chetco.

By way of semi-excuse, the trio had been prodded and prodded into making this trip by one Fred Gardner. Fred was hankering to know if he could book up with a shorter and more direct route from his mine at Vulcan Peak to Grants Pass and apparently admitting neither he nor his brush stomping kids nor their friends cared to do the exploring. Anyhow, it didn't take much prodding.

Five miles in from the highway the quote road unquote forks with the left hand going to Fiddler's Gulch, which we'd previously looked into and could neither find the fiddler nor any sign of his proverbial female dog.

Moralists proclaim that keeping on the right side leads to the smoothest life but following the rock strewn baldness up which the sign, "Onion Camp, 12 miles," directs the traveller would confound anyone with a modicum of intelligence. One good thing about it, absolutely no one without an adaptable vehicle for the complete journey could negotiate far past this sign. An appropriate vehicle motored-in this respect confines choice to a 4-wheel drive jeep, ditto high-slung pickup and in either case sufficient load to maintain constant traction.

For instance, in ten of these there are thirty eight switch backs, several of which so sharp they require backing up and angling around, on a high percentage grade and each hung on an eyelid shelf, safe for the experienced in such travel, but unnerving for the little folks attempting them. There are, of course a few lesser bends a seasoned burro could make without blushing.

Just before getting to Onion Camp a new road takes off where a sign board advises it is the route to Babyfoot Lake. In this "Babyfoot" country lies the famed Robere E. and Higgins and Peck's mine, from which, in the old days, quite Nationally fabulous bundles of gold were taken, so regardless of this and that, one may be influenced by the aura of the past, and Onion Camp was the rendezvous of those who

used it as a stopping place between the busy market town of Kerbyville and The Mines.

Onion Camp is a place where there's a swale in which grows luxuriant (and potent) wild garlic, a good spring and a place to build a cook fire. A cabin there has been wrecked, probably with snow load. Good horse feed, too.

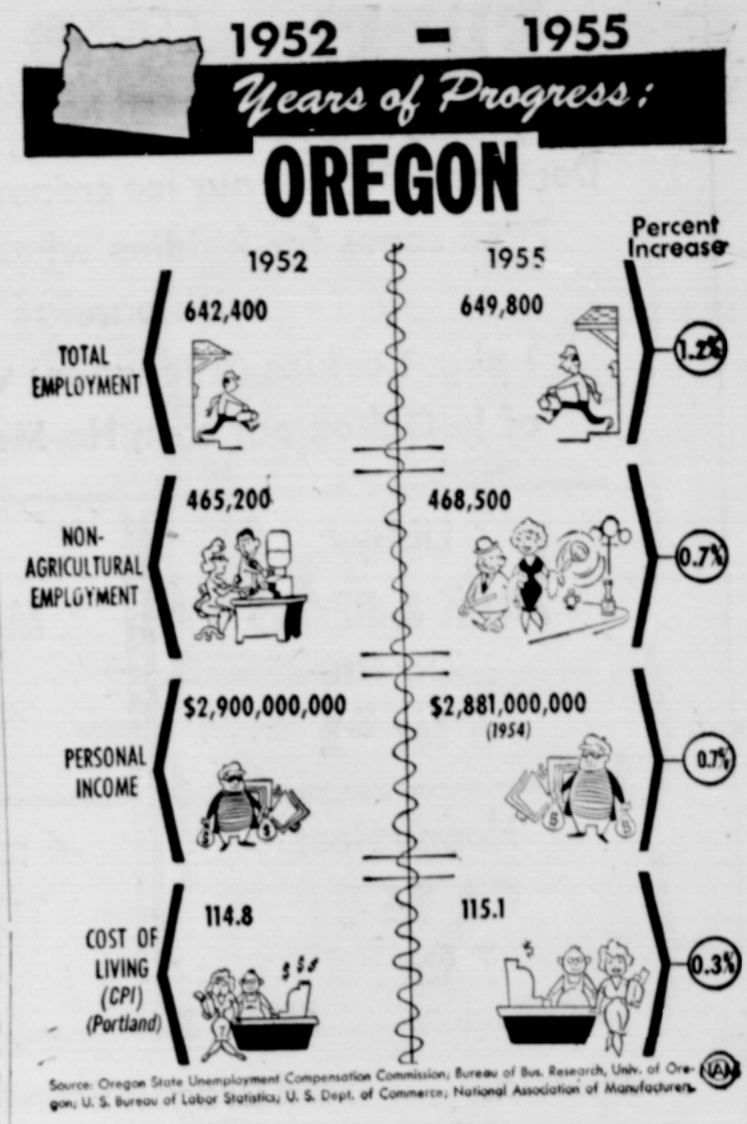
Six miles and several more hair-pin curves at around a mile high and dizzying canyons further, the half-mile trail up to Canyon Peak U. S. F. S. lookout takes off up a ridge. Ben hiked to the lookout and reported that functionary near scared out of his dozing wits when Ben tapped on his door! The quote Lookout unquote, had neither seen our trail of dust nor heard the motor, and quite oblivious to four jet planes cavorting almost directly overhead with miles and miles of long vapor trails, said he was a St. Louis student on his second summer at the station. An alarming contrast to the men who guarded the public domain, not so many years back for \$80 a month, supplied their own grub, and one closest to a reported smoke hiked in to it after he'd pin-pointed its location and studied beforehand how best to reach it.

Beyond Canyon Peak the road winds around and down toward the Chetco. We went, possibly four or five miles, traversing and rough going, at that until we came to a wash no wheeled vehicle could pass. The road went miles further, toward the extreme upper Chetco, across which could be seen the mines under Vulcan Peak and portions of the road-trail running south from there past Red Mountain and Chetco Peak, and thence toward Oregon Mountain.

The atmosphere was crystal clear, at one point the tip of Mt. Shasta was spotted. Snow Camp stood out like a bunyon, and the big smoke down west of Yreka boomed up.

Much of the way was in heavy, beautiful strands of pine and fir and in many places the huge up-standing cones of the symmetrical Noble fir were in evidence, sometimes crowning out above scattered, extremely rare Brewers weeping spruce whose long festoons of green swung idly back and forth in the breeze.

Other than a scant snack on the way, meals were forgotten until along about the after shank of the afternoon, dropping down and down and down to the Illinois, supper in the shade of the lowering sun; coffee, charred steaks and sundry trimmings at the aforesaid camp spot at the Illinois bridge, and then home. Some 260 miles had been travelled, which many motorists consider a half-days run, and even 150 miles of that on pavements but those extra 100 miles were where the venturers had all the road to themselves,



Among Our Visitors . . .

Sometimes you can't tell 'em from us!
Couple, in well worn and soiled drab outfits with three rugged looking grade schoolers, whole craven would have been snubbed in most areas, wanted, as per usual, dope on camping sites up-coast en route, incidentally, to home in British Columbia. One would never have considered the adults as packing sheepskins, the kind via the cap and gown route, but the object of their curiosity having been met, the "bull" went along too, deep into this writers ken of trees from which casually protruded mention of doctorates

and Ph. D's in botany and for prying into the intimate lives of commercial forest plants.
The upshot of it may have been the troupe diverted their immediate, up-coast jaunt to hit for a hog back in the back country where they could pick up some Sadler's Oak specimens, some dwarf rhododendrons, maybe, and then back-track into another Curry area for a good look at Brewer's weeping spruce, in the raw.

Before leaving town, however, they filled their gas tanks, both car and "Coleman", and got themselves a dab of groceries, probably more than enough for a day or two's snack for two grown folks and three growing youngsters, and these three growing youngsters told me (two boys, with a girl between) they did all the camp cooking and work so Ma and Pa would have a vacation too. Again, sometimes you can't tell 'em from us!

Campers In Parks
Overnight campers in Oregon's State Parks continue the three year 50 percent increase in numbers, according to the State Highway Department. The Parks were thrown open to overnight campers for the first time in 1953 and their popularity continues to the point where more facilities are being planned.
According to Parks Director C. H. Armstrong the increase is attributable to many causes and the desire on the part of the vacationer to make his money go as far as possible is only one of them. Improvement in camping facilities, mosquito-proof tents, sleeping bags, air mattresses, trailers of various sorts and providing adequate domestic equipment such as tables, stoves, and toilets makes camping more attractive.
Camp sites have been developed in 27 state parks and nine of these have trailer accommodations with water, electricity, and waste water disposal connections. Even with more than 700 campsites available all but a few parks are filled to overflowing every night during the vacation season.
Right now, Armstrong says, it is difficult to assess the nature of the long term trend but plans are going forward, by the state, to place additional campsites in the 27 parks now serving the campers and to develop for overnight camping some of the other 134 parks owned by the state.
County parks and the U. S. F. S. camps are helping to ease the burden, but the state's easily accessible parks apparently must continue to carry a heavy part of the load.

where there'd been no one else since the previous Monday's rains, and to places and things, probably very, very few without business there, had ever been or, for some years, may never be, within short sight of once hectic days of gold and now poked, quite all over, with the stopes from other mines.
From that gulch's gash previously mentioned, Fred will have to find someone else to do his exploring. This trio had enough but thanks for the prodding.

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MISS STEEVES LEAVES
Miss Kathleen Steeves, who lived in Brookings for many years left last month to make her home in Sacramento, where she has kin-folks. Her parents used to have a filling station and small store here years ago, on the site of the present Shell station.