

THE SMOKY YEARS

By ALAN LE MAY W.N.U. Release

INSTALLMENT 11 THE STORY SO FAR:

Dusty King and Lew Gordon had built up a vast string of ranches in the West. King was killed by his powerful and unscrupulous competitor, Ben Thorpe. Bill Roper, King's adopted son, was determined to avenge his death in spite of

the opposition of his sweetheart, Jody Gordon, and her father. Daring raids upon Thorpe's Texas holdings wiped him out of the state. Roper then prepared for a great raid upon the vast herds on Thorpe's Montana ranches. Several

thousand Indians had gathered near the Canadian border to take every beef that was driven across. Shoshone Wilce, one of Roper's men, told Jody that her father's life was in danger, so she rode to warn him. He was surprised to see her.

CHAPTER XV—Continued
When Lew Gordon spoke, his voice was so quiet that its very stillness carried threat of imminent destruction. "Bill Roper sent a man to you?"

"I didn't say that. He's a man who was with Bill Roper in the Texas Rustlers' War; he doesn't seem to be in the Montana raids."
"Who was it?" Lew Gordon rumbled. "What's his name?"

"Shoshone Wilce."
"Wilce! I know that name. I know it well. I'd rope and drag him in a second, if I caught him talking to you!"

"This man has talked with Ben Thorpe in Dodge," Jody told her father. "A lot of strange news is working down to Thorpe from up here in Montana. Some bands of rustlers are slashing up and down Montana throwing lead and leather into the Thorpe outfits under Lasham; they say he's badly hurt already—nobody will know how badly until the winter breaks."

Her father waited, his eyes angry. "The word from Dodge explains half the trouble that King-Gordon is up against," Jody said. "Thorpe can't believe that one lone cowboy, deserted by everyone who should have been his friend, could manage to smash his Texas holdings, and go on to cut away his herds in Montana. He thought that we were backing Billy Roper in the Texas Rustlers' War. And he believes that we're backing him now."

"Well?" Lew Gordon said. "You mean to say you came all this way to tell me that?"

"Ben Thorpe means to kill you." Lew Gordon's face showed no change of expression. But he did not reply at once.

"I don't doubt it," he said at last; "what would you expect? You bring war into a range and anybody is likely to go down."

Jody's face was white. "You know what's at the bottom of all the trouble we're having," her father said. "You know as well as I do that two years of nothing but trouble lays square at the door of Bill Roper."

Jody sprang up to face him. "I certainly do not know anything of the kind!" she answered him.

Lew Gordon sat at her. "It's an everlasting shame upon the cow country that Dusty King's killers are still in their saddles. I tell you, Billy Roper is the only man I've seen with courage enough to—"

And now her father angered as she had seldom seen him anger. "You'll tell me nothing!" he roared. "Roper! I'm sick of hearing his name—a dirty outlaw whelp that knows nothing but kill and burn and raid!"

Jody's eyes narrowed and filled with tears. "You may as well know this," she told her father. "The day that Billy Roper dies I want to die too."

For a moment Lew Gordon seemed bewildered; he stared at his daughter as if the devil had come up through the floor. The girl who faced him was entirely strange to him.

He heard her say, "If you had stayed by him, as Dusty King would have done, Thorpe would have been whipped and through, long ago."

"Child," he said queerly, "what are you talking about?"

"If you'd only take Billy Roper back into King-Gordon—"

"That'll never happen while I live," her father said flatly.

A silence fell between them, presently broken by the girl. "He asked me to ride with him once, when he first took the outlaw trail. I wish I had. To the last day I live, I'll wish I'd ridden with him then. And now I'd tell you something more. If ever he asks me again, I'll go."

For several moments he stared at her, more shaken than he had been since the death of Dusty King. Then his face congested, and he rose up on his boot heels to tower over the girl.

"By God," he said, his voice unsteady with the repression he put upon it, "that closes the deal I've kept my riders off him because of Dusty King, and I let him run on and on, rousing up a range war that has close to busted King-Gordon. But when it comes to tampering with you—it's the end! I'm through, you hear me?"

He caught up his battered sombrero, and his spurs rang as he turned toward the door.

"Dad, what are you going to do?" "Thorpe has a reward on Bill Roper's head. King-Gordon is going to double that reward."

He went storming out, his face black and violent with portent of war.

For several moments Jody Gordon stood motionless where he had left her. Then she turned and went out of the house to the long shed-like stable.

Shoshone Wilce was loitering there in the shadow of the rear wall, an uneasy and restless figure.

"Did you find out where Billy Roper can be reached?" Jody demanded.

"Yes, mam, I kind of did, I guess; and I got to be getting on there, Miss Gordon. If you'll just give me any message you want me to take, I'd sure like to be pulling out of here, before—"

"All right. You be here with two good horses just after dark."

"If you could just as leave give me the message now, I'd sure like to—"

"There is no message. I'm going with you to Bill Roper."

Shoshone Wilce looked like a man entrapped. "I can't do it! Your father—I just won't do it, Miss Gordon!"

"All right. I'll make the ride by myself."

"Hey, look! You can't!"

"Bill Roper isn't going to like this, Wilce."

Shoshone studied her searchingly, but found nothing to reassure him. It was in his mind that this girl would do exactly as she said. "My



"I'd sure like to be pulling out of here before—"

life ain't worth a nickel, either way," he almost whimpered.

"You be here with the horses," Jody said.

She turned and went into the house, leaving Shoshone Wilce standing unhappy and uncertain, ankle deep in the wet snow.

CHAPTER XVI

The rounding up of the wild bunch of riders lost Roper a few days; but within the week Bill Roper and Tex Long rode into the plains of the Little Dry.

Here around a spluttering fire the riders crouched in their sodden blankets, like Indians, while Roper gave out his orders. Thirty-two men and six outlaw leaders were now in the field against Walk Lasham's powerful Montana outfits in the Great Raid.

Roper's first move had been to split his renegade riders into five bunches under the leaders that he knew—Tex Long, Lee Harnish, Dave Shannon, Dry Camp Pierce and himself. Hat Crick Tommy he sent to Miles City in search of further word from Jody Gordon; Hat Crick would later rejoin Roper as messenger and scout.

It was Roper's plan that he and Tex Long, with twelve men between them, should make the most daring raid of all; a raid upon the big herds which Lasham held between the headwaters of Timber Creek and the Little Dry. Of all the ranges in which the wild bunch was interested, this was the nearest Miles City—the most accessible, the most closely watched, the best protected. How many cattle he could transfer from this range to the starving Canadian Sioux, Roper did not know; but it was his hope to raise such a conspicuous and stubborn disturbance as would mask the operations of the rest of the wild bunch, and permit Pierce to work unimpeded.

"The fourteen of us will split seven ways," Roper told them now. "I figure Lasham's look-out camp for this range is about twelve miles southeast. We'll comb every way but that way. I'm not telling you how to gather stock. Hunt 'em like you know how to hunt 'em. Move out one day's ride, spotting your cow bunches. Next day pick 'em up and work 'em this way. And on the third day throw your gather against a coulee or something where one man can hold 'em, and the other man of each pair ride back and meet me here. I figure this range is heavy with cattle. I don't see any reason why two good men can't

easy throw together three hundred head in a couple of days. That gives us a nice bunch of anyway two thousand. The more the better—but with two thousand we'll make our drive."

They slept that night under the slowly falling snow. Roper himself made coffee and routed out his riders two hours before the first light. They caught their horses in the dark, with hands that fumbled the stiffened ropes; then split off in pairs to comb the range.

For two days Roper watched the enemy camp while the snow held on, piling a deeper and deeper mat; then on the third day he returned to the rendezvous as the roundup men began straggling in.

Tex Long was the first one back. "This range is plumb solid with stock," Tex declared. "How many head do you figure me and Kid Johnson scraped up, just us two?"

"Well," Roper grunted, "upwards of a dozen—I should hope."

"Better'n six hundred head! Lord Almighty, Bill! Figuring they're worth twenty dollars apiece, and allowing that all the other boys do as good, we're liable to get out of here with around eighty thousand dollars worth of cattle! You realize that?"

But Roper was thinking of the letter in his pocket; the appeal of a girl who needed him in some unknown way, and who did not even know why he couldn't come.

All the next day they worked to throw the little bunches together into a trail herd. Not all of them had done as well as Tex Long and Kid Johnson, but most of them had done well enough. And then, at last, the first herd privateered in the Great Raid began to roll. A long unsteadily moving river of cattle poured northward, a dark welter in the thinning fall of the snow. White-faces mostly, blocky and heavy, well wintered on the prairie hay—Roper counted two thousand six hundred odd!

Pressed hard by the heavy force of cowboys, the cattle bawled but humped along northward into the valley of the Prairie Elk.

Rounding up within a day's ride of Miles City itself, Roper's men had taken this herd almost out of the very corrals of Lasham's outposts; and yet, so far as any of them knew, that swift-moving drive represented a harder blow than had ever been struck a cattlemen in a single raid. In all their months of effort the winter wild bunch had been unable to achieve an equal reprisal upon Lasham, and now they could hardly believe their own success. They forced the cattle hard, driving through the clogging snow at a rate incredible to men accustomed to handling market herds.

The cattle that broke the way through the snow kept dropping back, blown and tired; but as fast as they failed, others were forced forward to take their places. Longhorned, stag-legged steers of the old Texas strain fought the riders, breaking the heavy column repeatedly in their wild-eyed thrusts for liberty, and these were allowed to get away. Gaunt, weak cattle lagged back, unable to keep up even under the snapping rope ends of the tail riders; they also were allowed to drop out, promptly forgotten. Yet, in that first day, the side riders swept in enough north-roaming cattle to more than make up the loss.

Roper went with the herd as far as Circle Horse Creek; but when they had forded the shallows, crashing through the rotten ice, he turned back. With him he took four men who he believed would do what he said. The cattle were moving more slowly now, plodding doggedly through the heavy going; Tex Long and the remaining eight men could hold them to their way. What was needed now was work of a different kind, and Roper thought he knew how that was to be done.

It was his intention to fight a rear guard action—not only for this first herd, which would be delivered within the week to the Indians who would spirit it away, but for the protection of all the rest of the wild bunch raiding to westward.

But now as he neared the head of the Little Dry, a rider came dropping down a long slope upon a racing horse. His carbine was held above his ragged sombrero in sign of peace; and as he came near they saw that it was Hat Crick Tommy.

Roper jumped his horse out to meet Hat Crick. "What is it? Is there any word? Did she—"

Tommy's face was haggard with fatigue. "She's gone!" he jerked out. "She's been to Miles City—and now she's gone!"

"Gone? Gone where?" "Nobody knows. She's missing—disappeared—strayed or lost or rustled, I don't know which! Her father's wild crazy, and every K-G outfit in the north is combing the trails."

Roper sat staring for a full half minute. Then his hands fumbled for his reins, shook out the loop.

"Turn that roan pony! I've got to have a fresh horse."

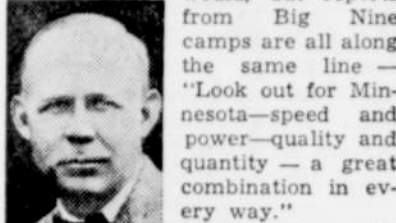
(TO BE CONTINUED)



THIS may seem premature, but the midsummer date hasn't been early enough to check football gossip on more than a few fronts.

Most of the coaches I've run across are still uncertain about army enlistments and the draft, but there is no uncertainty about what might be one of Minnesota's greatest teams.

Bernie Bierman will deplore any such talk, just as any football coach would, but reports from Big Nine camps are all along the same line—



Grantland Rice

"Look out for Minnesota—speed and power—quality and quantity—a great combination in every way."

"Minnesota will be the best football team in the country this fall," a Michigan entry told me. "If any team can go through the season unbeaten it will be Bernie Bierman's outfit, with a brilliant backfield working back of a big, fast line."

Which reminds us that Michigan has lost Tommy Harmon and Evashevski, and a combination of this sort isn't easy to replace. Bo McMillin writes that his Indiana squad



BERNIE BIERMAN

has good prospects and that, outside of Minnesota, Big Nine rivals can look for trouble from Ohio State, Wisconsin and Northwestern.

In the East

Conditions in the East are still uncertain until draft requirements are known.

But you might keep an eye on Swede Larson's Navy team when the first kickoff arrives. After considerable pressure the modest Major of Marines finally broke down and confessed that Navy might get along rather nicely before December's snows are reported.

"We have a good-looking squad," Coach Larson said, "losing few men from last fall. With any luck this should be one of the best Navy teams in some time."

Lou Little's Columbia squad should also move up, but there is still uncertainty at Harvard, Yale and Dartmouth.

On a recent trip to Texas we found that Dana Bible's Texas university outlook was the brightest of the Lone Star range. There is the chance that he may lose one or two of his star backs, but if he retains the material that is due back, including Layden and Crain, Bible will have a big Bowl contest on his hands.

SMU to Be Strong

Southern Methodist will again be strong, and so will Rice. Texas A. and M. loses most of her star cast from 1940 and T.C.U. is still looking for another Sammy Bough or Davey O'Brien. They do not graze on every cottonwood tree.

Along the West coast Stanford still has the ball, with many of her unbeaten veterans ready to pick up where they left off.

Red Sanders, the Vanderbilt director, looks for the usual steamy season in Dixie where Duke, Alabama and Tennessee, plus Tulane, will be well up.

Coach Sanders is looking forward to one of the season's feature battles when Princeton invades Nashville on the first southern trip a Tiger football team ever took. Both Princeton and Vanderbilt will be good, if not outstanding, and the Commodores will go all out to avenge last year's one-point defeat.

Season of Questions

It is doubtful if any football season ever opened with more questions at hand.

"How will Spike Nelson make out at Yale?" "How about Red Black at West Point?" "And Tus McLaughry at Dartmouth?"

"What will Tennessee do with Bob Neyland absent?" Neyland's record is one of the best in football history.

"Will Ohio State's ex-high school coach stop the Buckeye slump of 1940, with so many stars missing?" "What's the outlook at Notre Dame under new coaching?" My guess is that Notre Dame will be among the best.



A Bit on the Humorous Side

Getting Nowhere

The circus and fun fair was visiting a small town, and one old Negro had taken a fancy to the merry-go-round.

Round and round he went, never seeming to tire, until all his money was gone. Then only did he dismount to rejoin his wife, who had been watching him with impatient eyes.

"Well, Ebenezer," she said, "you sure have spent your money and had a good ride. But where you been, Ebenezer, where you been?"

Platonic friendship, says a wise man, is the gun you didn't know was loaded.

If That's Expression

Evelyn—Helen sings with a great deal of expression, doesn't she?

Joy—Well, she makes awful faces when she does it.

Something About Him

"My dear, I never imagined you would marry the man you did," said Gladys. "Neither did I, my dear," replied her friend. "I disliked his ways, but I adored his means."

Flush—Not Blush

Boogy—See how the bride is blushing?

Woogy—Go on, man. That's not a blush. That's the first flush of victory.

The man who counts in this world is the cashier.

Quite at Home

"Did Freda regret leaving the stage when she married?" "Not in the least. She feels she's still in the profession."

"How is that?" "One scene after another."

Get-Together Day

Bitters—How would you define a picnic?

Jitters—To me, my friend, a picnic is a day set apart to get better acquainted with ants, bugs, worms, mosquitoes, chiggers, ticks and poison ivy.

That's Her Count

"Bobby, how old is your sister?"

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty-five? She told me she was just twenty."

"Oh, I expect that's because she was five before she learned to count."

ASK ME ANOTHER?

A quiz with answers offering information on various subjects

The Questions

1. What South American country has a Colorado river?
2. What writer described the Brobdingnagians?
3. What is the weight of a gallon of pure water?
4. What is believed the world's oldest city still inhabited?
5. The bundle of rods on the back of a dime is called what?
6. What is the largest star known?
7. Is a pound of feathers heavier than a pound of gold?
8. How many names of U. S. Presidents begin with A?
9. If a boat is clinker-built, what is its distinguishing feature?
10. What is a canon in music?

The Answers

1. Argentina.
2. Swift (in "Gulliver's Travels," people of a country where everything is of enormous size).
3. One gallon of water weighs 8.355 pounds.
4. Damascus.
5. Fathoms.
6. Antares (90,000,000 times larger than our sun).
7. Yes. Gold is weighed by the troy system, 12 ounces to the pound, while feathers are weighed by the avoirdupois measure.
8. Three—John Adams, John Quincy Adams and Chester Arthur.

Our Gold and Silver

Since 1918 the U. S. mints have coined \$1,574,809,146 in silver, and since 1920 they have coined \$4,526,218,478 in gold. The United States stock in gold at the end of the fiscal year in 1940 was \$19,963,080,869 in gold coin and bullion, and \$547,078,371 in silver dollars and \$402,260,615 in subsidiary coins.

9. Its planks or plates overlap.
10. A canon is a piece of music (usually religious) in two or more parts, echoing each other. An early specimen is "Non nobis, Domine," composed by Birde in the Fourteenth century.



Failures Teach

Every failure teaches a man something if he will learn.—Dickens.



Register of Ills

History is only the register of crimes and misfortunes.—Voltaire.

It's A GOOD AMERICAN CUSTOM

READING THE FUNNIES
Sunday comics had their origin when Jimmy Swinnerton's cartoons first appeared in 1892 in the San Francisco "Examiner."

SMOKING mild, fragrant King Edward Cigars is another American custom in popular favor everywhere. For genuine smoking pleasure, light up a King Edward today.

KING EDWARD Cigars
WORLD'S LARGEST SELLER

2 for 5c

YOU ARE AN INFLUENTIAL PERSON

The merchant who advertises must treat you better than the merchant who does not. He must treat you as though you were the most influential person in town.

As a matter of cold fact you are. You hold the destiny of his business in your hands. He knows it. He shows it. And you benefit by good service, by courteous treatment, by good value—and by lower prices.

