

THE SMOKY YEARS

By ALAN LE MAY

W.N.U. Release

INSTALLMENT 8
THE STORY SO FAR:

Dusty King and Lew Gordon had built up a vast string of ranches which stretched from Texas to Montana. King was killed by his powerful and unscrupulous competitor, Ben Thorpe. Bill Roper, King's adopted son, undertook to

break Thorpe's power. His first step was to start a cattle war in Texas. He made this decision against the opposition of Lew Gordon and the tearful pleading of his sweetheart, Jody Gordon. The raids upon Thorpe's herds were successful at

first, but resistance was soon put up which caused Roper's men to leave him, one by one. Cleve Tanner, manager of Thorpe's Texas holdings, appeared not to feel the losses inflicted upon him. Roper's resources were dwindling low.

CHAPTER X—Continued
Dry Camp Pierce still loafed at the Pot Hook, dejected, hopeless. No one knew what he was waiting for. Roper never heard from the rest of them now. In spite of everything that Maxim could do, the Rangers were on the loose. The wild bunch that had threatened to dominate Texas was broken and split, scattered far and wide, every man for himself. Day and night, a saddle pony waited beside the door of the bunkhouse in which Roper slept...

"You'll get him, all right," he added hastily.
Half a block ahead another man stepped into the street, and walked toward Bill. Before his face could be seen in the black shadow under his hat, Bill Roper knew by the set of the broad shoulders, by the rolling swing of his stride, that it was Cleve.

The moments during which the two men walked toward each other drew out interminably. Their eyes were upon each other's faces now; Bill could see that Cleve Tanner looked happy, almost gay, as if this was the first good thing that had happened to him for a long time.

At twelve paces Cleve Tanner drew; to observers the men seemed so close together that it was impossible that either of them should live. Tanner's gun spoke five times, fast, faster than most men could slip the hammer. Nobody knew where the first four shots went; but the fifth shot was easy to place, for

He was surprised to hear her say that. He had no way of knowing how much she had heard, or what she had heard, about his shoot-out with Cleve Tanner.

"A notch? I hadn't thought anything about it."
All her bitter contempt of the lonely-riding men of violence came into her voice. "Isn't that what the gunmen and the cow thieves always do?"

He was motionless a long time. Then he drew the skinning knife that always swung at the back of his belt in a worn sheath. Its blade was lean and hollowed, worn almost out of existence by a thousand honings. He stood looking at the knife; he tossed it in the air, and caught it by the handle again.

"I wouldn't go cutting marks on the handle of a gun," he said at last. His voice was thick. "Nobody cares what anybody does to the handle of a gun."

Roper stepped forward, and with the keen blade cut a notch clean and deep in the left arm of Dusty's cross.

When he looked at Jody she was staring at him strangely, almost as if she were afraid.



Bill Roper holstered his own smoking forty-four.

Suddenly Bill Roper turned into the unaccountable kid that his years justified. Like a man suddenly coming alive, he took Shoshone by the throat, shook him as if he had weighed no more than a cat. His teeth showed bare and set.

He said, "Shoshone—you fool with me—"

Shoshone cried out through the grip on his throat, "I tell you, Cleve Tanner—"

He couldn't say any more. Bill Roper was cool again, now. "What makes you think so?"

"He failed his delivery at the Red. Where he was supposed to bring up fifteen thousand head, a little handful of punchers showed up with a few hundred. He can't round his cattle—if he's got any cattle—and he can't make delivery at the Red!"

"We didn't believe you," Shoshone Wilce babbled on. "We all said it couldn't be done. But by gosh we've done it! All over Texas, Tanner's notes are being called, as the word spreads. Wells Fargo refuses to honor his signature for a dime. They say now that Ben Thorpe won't back Tanner—Thorpe denies him, and the Tanner holdings are being closed up and sold out—"

"You sure?" Roper asked, looking up from the ground again.

"Am I sure? You think I'd risk my damn throat coming here to tell you something like this, if I didn't know for sure?"

"No," Roper admitted, "I guess not."

"It's all over," Shoshone tried to tell him. "Can't you realize it, man?"

"No," Roper said.

CHAPTER XI

Strolling, easy-going, but somehow reluctant, Bill Roper walked the streets of Tascosa, between the false-fronted wooden buildings that lined the hoof-stirred dust.

Sooner or later, he knew, Cleve Tanner would appear upon this one main street. Everybody knew that Tanner was on the warpath, determined to seek out Bill Roper. It was said that Tanner's only remaining interest was to bring down the youngster who had cut Texas from under him.

Yet ten days passed before Cleve Tanner came. It was eleven o'clock on a sunny Saturday morning when Dry Camp Pierce brought Bill the word.

"Well, kid, he's here. You were right again—you won't have to hunt him out. He's looking for you; all you have to do is wait."

"Where is he now?"

"In some bar, a block up the street. He's walking from bar to bar, asking if you've been seen. You might as well wait for him here."

"No," Roper said. "I'll walk out and meet him, I think."

Dry Camp poked up into his face. "Kid, you look sick!"

"I don't feel real happy," Roper admitted.

"Draw deliberate and slow," Pierce counseled. "Take your time, don't hurry, whatever you do. But don't waste any time, either. Fast and smooth—"

"I get you," Roper said with a flicker of a grin. "Take my time, but be quick about it. Move plenty slow, but fast as hell. All right, Dry Camp!"

He gave the butt of his gun a hitch to make sure it was loose in its leather; then he spun the whiskey away from him untasted, and walked out.

Dry Camp Pierce looked at the full glass, and exchanged a worried glance with the bartender. Then he followed Bill.

Dry Camp kept blinking his eyes in the bright light, as if they were dry; and there were white patches at the corners of his mouth.

"Don't give him too much of a break, kid. He's awful bad. But

it blew a hole in the street as Tanner's gun stubbed into the dust. Bill Roper holstered his own smoking forty-four. He had fired twice.

Dry Camp Pierce was at his elbow again. "Here's the horses. It's your time to ride. By God, I knew you could take him, kid."

Roper was feeling deathly sick.

CHAPTER XII

It was well into the summer as Bill Roper once more rode south out of Ogallala toward the pile of stones that marked the grave of Dusty King. Jody Gordon rode with him. In the few days he had stopped over in Ogallala he had hardly seen her at all. At first she had refused to ride with him today; but at the last moment, as if on an impulse, she had changed her mind.

Roper, studying her sidelong, thought that Jody seemed to have aged several years in one. Impossible now to find any trace of the irrepressible, up-welling laughter that had been so characteristic of her a year before. Her eyes were unlighted, and a little tired-looking; her mouth was expressionless except for a faint droop at the corners, which suggested—perhaps resignation, perhaps a hidden bitterness.

She didn't have much to say; but finally she asked him, "What did my father decide?"

"He says now that I'll never have another penny out of Dusty King's share until—until he's able to dictate to me what I'm going to do with it; or, that's what it amounts to."

"Did you quarrel with my father?"

"No. He said some kind of bitter things, but I didn't say anything. I asked for certain things—five camps in Montana, mainly. Of course, that was a waste of breath."

"But you'll go on, and throw yourself against Walk Lasham in Montana?"

"Yes; I have to go on."

They were silent after that; and presently they sat, almost stirrup to stirrup, but somehow infinitely far apart, looking down at the stacked boulders from which rose the wooden cross that Bill Roper had made, nearly a year and a half ago.

For a little while he stood looking at the cross which he had made of railroad ties. He said, half aloud—"One down, Dusty..."

"I suppose," Jody said, "you'll be cutting a notch on the handle of your gun, now."

All through the afternoon Jody Gordon had ridden the barren trails above Ogallala, on a pony that forever tried to turn home. Thaw was on the prairie again, and the South Platte was brimming with melted snow; in the air was something of the damp, clean smell which had marked another spring, in this same place. But it was now more than six months since Jody had seen Bill Roper; and she found it no help that she was forever hearing his name.

It was with reluctance that she at last rode up the rise upon which it stood, unlighted, in the dusk.

She unsaddled her own pony, booted it into the muddy corral, and threw the forty pound kak onto the saddle-pole with the easy, one-handed swing of the western rider. As she turned toward the house she was trying not to cry.

Then, as she walked through the stable, a figure rose up from the shadows beside the door and barred her way.

Jody Gordon's breath caught in her throat. She said, evenly, "Looking for someone, Bud?"

The spare-framed visitor took off his hat and held it uneasily in his two hands. "Well, I tell you, Miss Gordon—could I speak to you for just a minute? I'll tell you the fact of the matter. I'm a Bill Roper man."

Jody Gordon's heart jumped like a struck pony. "Billy sent you to me?"

"I haven't seen Bill Roper. But I've seen Ben Thorpe. Miss Gordon, tell me one thing: Is your father backing Bill Roper? I mean, is he backing this plowing into Ben Thorpe?"

"My father," Jody Gordon said, "has quit Bill Roper in every way he possibly could."

"That's what I thought," Shoshone Wilce said. "Only trouble is, people that don't know the difference, they don't none of them believe that any more."

Jody Gordon interrupted him sharply. "What's happened?"

"Miss Gordon, your father is in a terrible bad fix. I'm afraid—I'm afraid he's going to die before this thing is through."

"What do you mean?"

"Most people think Lew Gordon is backing Bill Roper—maybe you know that? Well, now there's a feller rode to Ben Thorpe from Miles City—a feller that was a foreman with Thorpe's Montana outfits under Walk Lasham. Maybe this feller had some kind of fight with Lasham—I don't know nothing about that. But this feller swears to Thorpe that Lasham is letting the Montana herds drain away to the Indians, and to the construction camps, and Ben Thorpe never seeing a penny of the money from beef or hide."

"Is Bill Roper gutting the Thorpe outfits in Montana?"

"Don't know, myself. They say he's swarming all over Montana, with a bunch of kid renegades behind him, riding like crazy men, and raiding night after night. Some say nobody knows how hard Lasham is hurt, Lasham least of any; and some say Lasham has sold out to Bill Roper, or your father—or both."

"What does Thorpe himself think?"

"Thorpe thinks your father has bought Walk Lasham. Just the same as he thought your father bought Cleve Tanner in Texas, until Bill Roper gunned Cleve down. And Thorpe is fit to be tied. A man like him—he's terrible dangerous always, Miss Gordon; but now he's ten times more dangerous than he ever was in his life."

"You mean you think Ben Thorpe will—will—"

"Miss Gordon, I know. Ben Thorpe is going to kill Lew Gordon, just as sure as—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Household News

by Lynn Chambers



... JUST LIKE MOTHER USED TO MAKE!
(See Recipes Below)

IT WAS WONDERFUL FOOD!

Remember flying home, pigtails thumping, to smell supper, and guess? Remember being saucer-eyed as mother's marble cake took a blue ribbon at the fair? And remember licking the last bit of sweetness from the frosting platter?

I know you must remember. How could you forget? It was wonderful food!

And it's to the best cooks in the world—our mothers—that this week's column is dedicated. When you pay them homage on Mother's day, 1941, perhaps you'll enjoy using some of the following recipes, favorites of the long ago.

In those days, to be caught without plenty of food, and good food, too, for all comers was to show oneself a poor housekeeper, a bad hand in the kitchen.

But times have changed. A large "crook" of butter, a "basket" of eggs, and a "wedge" of cheese are no longer a part of the regular supplies on the shelf in the vegetable cellar. Nor are recipes penciled on the fly-leaf of the family ledger. But the basic goodness is still the same.

So, whether it be crusty brown doughnuts, chicken pie and jelly roll, huge, fluffy cakes, or rich chocolate pie, let's take mother back, down memory lane!

Lovely to look at and utterly delightful to eat is the Sour Cream Devil's Food Cake, which I'm sure was a favorite of grandmother's.

Sour Cream Devil's Food Cake.

- 2 cups sifted cake flour
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup butter or other shortening
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 1 egg, unbeaten
- 3 squares unsweetened chocolate, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup thick sour cream
- 1/4 cup sweet milk

Sift flour once, measure, add soda and salt, and sift together three times. Cream butter thoroughly, add sugar gradually, and cream together well. Add egg and beat very thoroughly; then chocolate and vanilla, and blend. Add about one-fourth of the flour and beat well; then add sour cream and beat thoroughly. Add remaining flour, alternately with milk, a small amount at a time, beating after each addition until smooth. Turn into two greased 9-inch layer pans and bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) 30 minutes, or until done.

Spread Felicity Frosting on top and sides of cake. Top with glossy

LYNN SAYS:

In an old book of household advice, written in 1879, are some words of wisdom "to help homemakers." I'm passing them on to you "for what they're worth" in the modern, up-to-date home.

"Use a clam shell to scrape skillets or saucepans; to scour your iron pots and griddles, use wood ashes.

"Sweeping a carpet with new fallen snow will make it look very bright and fresh. Also, it is a good plan to save tea leaves, and, with them not too moist, sweep a dark carpet. This is not advised for light colors.

"Woodwork may be dusted with a long-feathered wing, preferably that of a turkey.

"For washing fine clothes, use a pounder—not a large, old-fashioned affair, but one about twice as large as a potato masher, and pound your clothes as they soak in sal-soda water. The rubbing on a board will then be very easy. Use a clothes wringer if you can possibly get one.

"Never buy ground coffee. Take whole berries and heat; grind while hot.

"All housewives should be well advised in cookery, and should know how to make good dishes, such as 'Jenny Lind Cake,' 'Parsnip Pie,' 'Marrow Dumplings' and 'Flannel Pancakes.'"

THIS WEEK'S MENU

- Menu For a Mother-Daughter Banquet
- (For not-too-large a group)
- Strawberry and Pineapple Cup
- Roast Chicken Giblet Gravy
- Bread Filling Fresh Asparagus
- Fruit Salad
- Ice Cream
- Coffee
- Cookies
- Milk

chocolate coating, made by combining 1 square unsweetened chocolate, melted, 1/4 cup sugar, and 1/4 cup water. Cook over low flame until smooth and thick. Cool slightly. Double the recipe for three 10-inch layers.

Felicity Frosting.

- 2 egg whites, unbeaten
- 2 cups brown sugar, firmly packed
- Dash of salt
- 7 tablespoons water

Combine egg whites, sugar, salt and water in top of double boiler, beating with rotary egg beater until thoroughly mixed. Place over rapidly boiling water, beat constantly with rotary egg beater, and cook 7 minutes, or until frosting will stand in peaks. Remove from fire, but allow to remain over hot water, and beat 2 minutes longer. Place over cold water and continue beating 3 minutes. Makes enough frosting to cover top and sides of two 9-inch layers.

Just like mother used to make.

That's what you'll say when you taste the delicious cookies, made by the directions given below. When mother baked cookies she made them rich with butter and usually full of fruit, like:

Fig Oaties.

- Boil 5 minutes in water to cover: 1 1/2 cups dried figs
- Drain, clip stems and cut figs into thin strips (scissors are handy).
- Cream together: 1 cup butter 2 cups beet or cane sugar

Blend well, then add liquids: 1/4 cup milk 1 teaspoon vanilla

Sift together and add: 1 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour 3/4 teaspoon salt 2 teaspoons baking powder

Add: 5 cups quick-cooking oats

Stir until well blended, then drop by small spoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet and flatten slightly. Bake in moderately hot oven, 400 degrees F., for 13 to 15 minutes. Press a nut meat, strips of fig or cherry into tops before baking if desired. For a glazed top, brush with hot honey after baking and place under broiler for a minute or two. Makes 5 1/2 dozen medium-sized cookies.

Do you recall the old cracker barrel? It was a necessity in days gone by when homemakers often made their own crackers, and even their own baking powder and bread starter. Thinking that perhaps in your spare moments you might like to try your hand at cracker making, I'm including a recipe.

Crackers Made With Yeast.

- 1/2 package granular yeast
- 1 pint warm water
- 1 1/2 quarts flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1/4 cup sour milk
- 1/4 cup shortening
- 1 teaspoon soda

Set sponge of yeast, water and flour at night. In the morning add the other ingredients and flour to stiffen very stiff. Pound with rolling pin. Fold over and pound again. Continue until the dough is smooth. Place on a lightly floured board and roll in a thin sheet. Cut in squares and punch holes on top with a fork.

Place in ungreased pans and bake in a 400-degree F. oven. These are inexpensive and very good!

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

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Not So Dusty, but Oh, What an Excavation!

Willie was on the hunt for information. He had been set to entertain a portly visitor, who, having no inquisitive children of his own, had answered all his questions with unusual patience.

"And what," was Willie's 198th question, "are houses made of?"

"Houses," replied the stout man, "are made of bricks."

"And what are engines made of?"

"Engines are made of iron."

"And what is bread made of?"

"Flour."

Then, as the anticipated light step and soft rustle of Willie's sister sounded outside, he added, "Now, Willie, I can answer only one more question."

Willie decided that it should be a good one.

After a pause, Willie asked: "Well, what are we made of?"

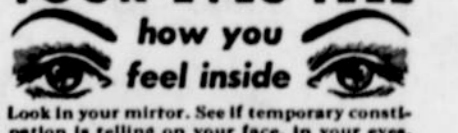
"Dust and earth, my son."

"My," said Willie, "they must have made a whacking big hole when they took you out!"

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