

THE SMOKY YEARS

By ALAN LE MAY

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INSTALLMENT 9

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

opposition by his sweetheart, Jody Gordon, and her father. Roper's successful raids against Thorpe's Texas holdings wiped him out of the state. When Roper visited Jody one night, she almost contemptuously called him a cattle thief

and gunman. His determination unchanged, he now turned his attention toward Thorpe's ranches in Montana. Jody was secretly visited by Shoshone Wilce, one of Roper's men, who warned that her father's life was in danger.

CHAPTER XII—Continued

Jody Gordon's eyes had darkened in the dusk, making her face seem very pale. "What do you want me to do?"

Shoshone Wilce shrugged. "That ain't hardly up to me, Miss Gordon. But I'll tell you this: many's the time I've seen your father go stomping down the board walk right here in Ogallala, alone, and not even armed. That won't do, Miss Gordon. If I was in your place, I wouldn't never let him out of the house without his gunbelt is strapped on, and the iron free in its leather. And wherever he goes, there ought to be three or four good hard-shooting cowboys with him; because, if I know Ben Thorpe, he isn't going into any gunfight alone!"

Jody peered at him intently. "What made you bring this word to me?"

"I'm a Bill Roper man," Shoshone Wilce said. "God knows, Miss Gordon, stringing with Bill Roper has never done anything for me. But—well, I just thought Bill Roper would want you to know. I kind of got the idea he thinks a heap of you, Miss Gordon."

And now another pony came slashing up to the corral. One of the leading foremen had come in.

"I got to be getting along," Shoshone Wilce said quickly.

She turned away, but instantly turned back again, and gripped Shoshone's arm just as he was sliding out of sight.

"Stay around," she ordered him. "Stay here until—"

"Miss Gordon," came the quick whisper. "I've got to get on to Miles City. I—"

"I thought so. Bill Roper's somewhere up there, isn't he? Yes, well, I'm going to join my father there—I'll ride with you in the morning."

"Four hundred miles! And no coach until—"

"Don't worry about that. It takes saddle ponies to make time."

"But—I'm afraid your Paw might think—"

"I don't know how Bill Roper ever used you," Jody said with contempt. Shoshone winced. "I—I'll be around."

He faded into the shadows as Jody walked out of the stable, her eyes hard and bright in the dusk.

CHAPTER XIII

Bill Roper sat alone at a rear table in the Palace Bar, in Miles City—the young, turbulent center of a vast, raw range, the possibilities of which were still unknown.

For three months Roper had ridden through the bitter Montana winter. It had been no trouble for him to sweep together a dozen malcontent cowboys who hated Lasham or Thorpe, or both. Already they knew Bill Roper's name.

Against their common enemy these youngsters could be led, wild, reckless and crazy for raid; and Roper had led them as Texas had taught him.

His new northern wild bunch faced conditions in many ways bitterly adverse. Here in the north were no ousted cattlemen, no established population to which he could look for help. The Canadian border was far away, and no market awaited the hard-pushed herds on the other side.

What Montana had that Texas did not have was a concentration of Indian tribes, principally Sioux and Cheyenne, deprived of their hunting grounds, and dependent for food upon beef which the government was pledged to supply. It was to this circumstance that Roper had turned.

The giant beef contracts which the government threw upon the market had inevitably attracted more than one kind of graft. The result was famine-pitiful, relentless. Starvation stalked through the lodges of the Sioux, the Cheyenne, the Crow—and with it, Roper's opportunity.

Scouring the country, Roper turned up four Indian agents who were already badly scared. They had overplayed their hands, and were now faced with a loss of life among their charges about which they could do nothing without revealing their own corrupt inefficiency. These men had connived with Lasham in bringing about a condition of tribal starvation; they were willing to connive with Bill Roper to cover up their position in any way they could.

By delivering beef to the reservations under these highly irregular conditions, Roper's wild bunch could little more than make expenses. But the advantage was this—a beef herd delivered to an Indian tribe disappeared over night, leaving little trace. A thousand hands skinned out the beef, destroying the portions of the hides containing the brands.

Constantly changing horses, perpetually in the saddle, Roper's saddle hawks swung across Montana. They first struck at Muddy Bend, picking up four hundred head of steers in the breaks of the Yellowstone. Three days' hard driving delivered these to a village of Assiniboine. Only four days later they

were on the flats of the Little Thunder, far away. Here, struggling through a soft blinding snow, they ran off five hundred head, and a few days later three hundred more. They Christmased in company with a herd of lifted steers somewhere between Three Sleep and the Little Powder; and New Year's found them sifting the pick of Lasham's cattle out of his Lost Soldier range.

By the end of January they had moved three thousand head—the very cream of the wintering stock. Repeatedly they had driven cattle incredible distances in impossible time.

Yet he knew his work had only begun. All their hard riding would fail of effect unless he could strike such a smashing blow as would cause a split between Lasham and Ben Thorpe.

And Roper had a plan—rash in scope and method, but savage in effect if it could be fulfilled. Already he had enough riders in sight to strike this last desperate blow. But the men available to his purpose were wild-eyed fighting kids who could not be driven and could scarcely be led; Roper could not captain his campaign alone. So now he fretted in Miles City, seeking three or four outlaw leaders who would make his preparations complete.

Still studying everyone who came into the bar, Roper broke open a

deck of cards and laid out a hand of solitaire.

Now one of the dance hall girls came to his table, slipping uninvited into a chair. This was a girl whose attention bothered and embarrassed Roper every time he came here. Her name was Marquita.

He didn't know what attracted her to him; he didn't know what attracted any particular woman to any particular man. It may be that his very disinterest was what caught her attention first, and later gave him the desirability of the unobtainable.

She spoke to him now in a quiet, lifeless voice. "Why don't you like me?"

"I like you all right," he said. "No, you don't. You don't even see me at all."

He noticed now that she looked different tonight; and after a moment he recognized that this was because there was no paint on her face. That would be because he disliked paint—though he had no idea how she had found that out. Her washed face was a perfectly symmetrical oval set with black eyes a little slanted, and her black hair, parted in the middle, was drawn back severely, in the fashion of the mestizo girls of the Texas border.

She leaned toward him now, and spoke rapidly, her voice low and compelling. "Listen—I hate Walk Lasham, too."

"Listen," she insisted. "You have to listen to me. Walk Lasham's in town. He came in this afternoon."

So, Roper thought, the time had come to move on again, with his work undone. He didn't like it, much.

"Well, thanks," he said; "I'm glad to know."

"He knows you're here—and what you're here for."

"I suppose he does," Roper said. "You're waiting here for Lasham," she accused him. "You know he'll come here. You're going to try shooting it out—"

Roper shrugged and was silent. "Bill, it's hopeless! Walk Lasham is the fastest gunfighter in the north!"

Roper shrugged again. "Walk wants no fight with me."

"You're going to force the fight yourself! That's what you've been waiting here for, ever since you came to Miles City. Any moment Lasham may walk in that door—"

Marquita sat staring at him hopelessly, in her eyes a fixity of devotion which his taciturnity seemed to be increasing. Against his will he was becoming something that was happening to Marquita.

He remained silent; and, in a little while, she went away.

An hour passed, while Roper, drinking slowly, played his solitaire and watched the door.

Then suddenly Marquita was back. She came behind his chair to speak close to his ear in a panicky whisper. "He's coming! He's coming along the walk—"

"All right."

"Walk has two of his men with him," she said rapidly. "You haven't a chance, not a ghost of a chance. I can't bear to see you killed! I know you don't care anything about me. If you did I'd go anywhere in the world with you. But now you have to come out of here—quick—by the back way. I'll do anything—"

Roper turned his head to look up into her face, very close to his. There was more to this girl than there was to the rest of her kind. Even now he was unable to recognize that Marquita was capable of a sincerity of purpose, and a passionate preoccupation in her purpose, not to be expected here. "I wouldn't step aside two feet," he told her, "to pass Walk or any man. I tell you, Walk won't fight!"

Suddenly she whimpered. Bill Roper saw that three men had come into the front of the Palace Bar.

The first of the three, a dark, lean man with wide, bowed shoulders, was Walk Lasham.

Marquita caught Bill's head in her arms, forced up his chin, and kissed him. He was surprised at the unexpected softness of her lips, hot against his mouth. Then abruptly Marquita stooped, and as she sprang away from him he felt the weight of his gunbelt ease. She flung over her shoulder, "It's for your own sake!" Her face was white, frightened.

He half started up, in instant anger, but the girl was running down the room. He saw her put something under the bar, and he knew it was his gun.

Roper rang his whiskey glass upon the table, trying to catch a bartender's eye. If Lasham had not seen what the girl had done, one of them could bring him his gun before it was too late. But the bar was thronged; the bartenders were working fast, in the thick of the evening rush.

The bar-flies had made room for Walk Lasham at the end of the bar, and Lasham and his two cowboys had their heads together now, consulting.

One of the cowboys, a man with a scar across his face that distorted his mouth in the manner of a hare lip, went quickly behind the bar, hunted beneath it, and returned to Walk. Roper saw Lasham's long face set. He said to himself, "Walk knows—"

Walk Lasham was fiddling with his empty glass on the bar, and the scar-mouthed man was watching Roper covertly with one eye from under the brim of his hat. Lasham reached for a bottle, filled his glass, tossed it off. Then he turned squarely toward Roper, and came walking back through the big room.

Roper played his cards, his hands visible upon the table. It seemed to take Lasham a long time to walk the length of the room. Roper glanced at the lookout chair, where a salaried gun-fighter usually sat. It was empty now.

Walk Lasham was standing in front of him.

"So you," he said, "are the tough gunman that killed Cleve Tanner."

Bill Roper raised his eyes to Walk Lasham's face. "And you," he said, "are one of the dirty cowards that murdered Dusty King."

A hush had fallen upon the room, unbroken by the clink of a glass or the rattle of a chip. Lasham and Roper looked at each other through a moment of silence.

He dropped his eyes to Roper's hands, and his own right hand started a tentative movement toward the butt of his gun. His spread fingers shook a little as his hand crept down. But he was grinning now, sure of his ground.

"Looks a little different to you now, huh?"

"A coyote always looks like a coyote to me."

The smile dropped from Lasham's face. "I'm going to give you every chance," he said. His voice swung in even rhythms, low and sing-song. "I'm going to count five. Draw and fire any time you want to; because on five I'm going to kill you where you sit."

"I don't think you are."

"One; two—" Lasham said.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARDON (Consolidated Features-WNU Service.)

NEW YORK.— Birthday interviews with venerated patriarchs of this land are usually given to bland optimism, though the heavens be Morgenthau, 85, falling. It's an old American custom. Henry Morgenthau Sr., just turned 85, has been an exception. We haven't seen his customary chat with the reporters this year, but when and if it is recorded we may be sure he sees what he sees and isn't trying to slick things up. Not that he's a pessimist or defeatist. I remember meeting him on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, a few years ago and was tremendously impressed with his faith, ardor and fighting spirit.

He knows a lot about wars and trouble. It was our Civil war that brought him here from his native Mannheim, Germany. His father was a prosperous cigar manufacturer. Civil war tariffs put him out of business and the family came to this country when Henry Morgenthau was nine years old. He was a lawyer at 23, turned to real estate and finance, and had his money-making over at 55, with time, means and mental equipment to turn to the humanities, to philanthropy and good works in general. Now he has a son in the cabinet, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and the unflagging energies which are the reward of an abstemious life.

If there's a dark side, he isn't afraid to look at it. He was back from Europe in 1933 with the simple conclusion that the world was heading into another war. "There is, in Europe," he said, "no honest, moral desire for peace." In 1913, his friend Woodrow Wilson made him ambassador to Turkey, which post he held until 1916. Thereafter, he helped pick up the pieces, in the ruin and chaos of the middle east. He has been both observing and studious and unhappily for easy-going optimists, singularly clear-sighted in his prophetic look ahead.

THERE'S a tale of a professor who grew old writing a history of civilization. Late one night he finished it. Then, after a brief survey of the result

Thorndike Now Holds Intelligence Can't Be Tested

of his arduous labors, he heaved a great sigh and threw the history in the fire. "What's the matter?" asked his wife. "There isn't any civilization," he replied.

Dr. Edward L. Thorndike, author of the famous Thorndike intelligence test, probably wouldn't say there isn't any intelligence, but he does say intelligence can't be tested, according to news reports of his address before the American Philosophical society at Philadelphia. Dr. Thorndike's apostasy no doubt will set up some new measuring standards.

If we don't learn much, about keeping out of wars and such, it isn't Dr. Thorndike's fault. A professor at Columbia for 37 years, he is the author of a shelf of books in the general field of the psychology of learning. He has just about surrounded the subject of "How We Learn." The question of what we learn seems to be still wide open.

From Williamsburg, Mass., he went to Wesleyan university, Harvard and Columbia and taught at Western Reserve before joining the Teachers' college faculty in 1897. He is 67 years old.

THE word is getting around that the founding fathers could fight well because they were supercharged with vitamin B. They ate

anything handy and got the thiamin of the B, which is to be found mainly in rougage.

Prof Russell M. Wilder of the Mayo foundation is alarmed over our shortcomings in this regard. He says, "Continued deficiency of the thiamin content of American diets may have led to a certain degree of irremediable deterioration of the national will."

His conclusion is one of many in which it is insisted that we must look to the drug store and the grocery for the real fighting urge. Courage comes in bottles or baskets in these fantastic days.

Dr. Wilder is one of the country's leading specialists on nutrition and diseases of metabolism. Born and reared in Cincinnati, he was educated at the University of Chicago, and Rush Medical college; practiced in Chicago and has been with the Mayo foundation since 1922. He was a medical gas officer in the World war.



THE PAPERS OF PRIVATE PURKEY

Dear Mom:

What I can't understand about the army is that know matter what I say is the matter with me the doctor gives me the same pill. At first I thought it was just a mistake but now I no different becuz yesterday when I complained of an ulcerated tooth I got the same pill I been getting for headaches, cramps, soar throte and a sty. I wish you would send me some pills of any kind. It don't matter what they are so long as they are different from the one I get here and I am inclosing one so you won't duplicate it.

I don't think the draft army takes sickness serious and in a way I can't blame it becuz men have been showing up for sick call by the hundreds on account of there are so many beautiful nurses in the camp hospital and it is the only way to get near them. All these guys get is another pill so I gess to get into a army hospital you have to have at lease a broken leg but I think they would first try a pill on me for that two.

We have had some nice warm days witch is a grate relief becuz ever since I was drafted I feel like I have been in the Klondike and I never knew it wuz so cold outdoors in winter befor. But the ground is thawing out and so is the drill sergeant and everybody is happier than at any time since our numbers came out in that glass bowl. We see robins most every day now and we have let the fire go out in the stoves which we get in the modern draft camp and some of us are even taking our uniforms and shoes off when we go to bed.

I hoap the war is over before next winter as I am strickerly a warm weather fighter I am afraide. If there is ever a expeditshunary force this war covers so much territory that it has all climates and I hope my division gets sent to Africa and not to no place where there is snow and ice. The more I think of the past winter here in camp the more I appreshiate what G. Washington went thru at Valley Forge. We didn't cross no river in no open boat with a horse in the middle to interfere with the rowing but that was about the only difference I gess but do not think I am squawking morn.

We have lots of visitors now and I wish you would come up next Sunday. Nellie Armstead wuz up last Sunday and Kitty O'Neil wuz up Saturday and I had a close call as they both mite have come on the same day. The caferteria for visitors is wonderful just like those nickle-in-the-slot places and while the food may not be no better than in the army it is fancier looking and the cooks take more panes with it. Eating don't interest me so much no more morn on account of I have been doing kitchen work so much I can't think of eats without thinking of washing dishes or peeling potatus. I got to peel potatus agin tomorrow witch I don't understand becuz their must be plenty of other soldiers who are as good at it as me but I keep getting picked on and the mess sergeant says it is part of my vocational training.

It is funny the garage ain't found no customer for my jalopy as it is in good shape and had only been driven 200,000 miles and I told the man that I would knock \$4 off my asking price of \$45 on account of three tires don't hold air long and the right handed door is off. I wish you wud call him up and ask him to get \$30 for it as I need money and there is another delay in the army pay.

Your loving son, Oscar.

P. S.—I wrote Olive Johnson but didn't get no answer so I wish you wud see if she has moved away or what. Do not worry about me as I am all right except for two crushed toes where a Army saucer fell on my foot.

White uniforms have been abandoned for sailors in the U. S. navy when working on ship, and khaki substituted. The yachting influence has just about disappeared everywhere.

NEVER BELIEVE 'EM WHEN THEY SAY: Supply Sergeant.—Just your size, buddy.

Buck Private.—I've got a date with a swell dame tonight.

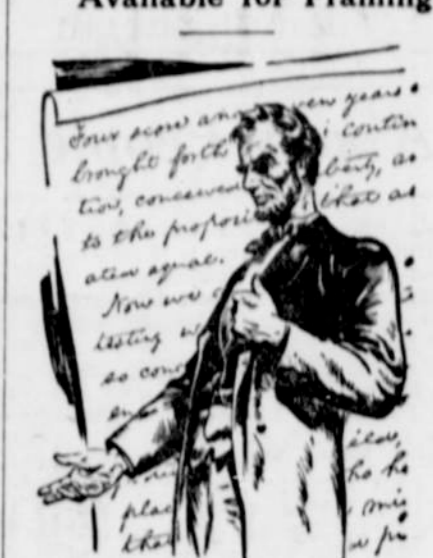
Old-Timer.—I'll never enlist again if I get out of this.

Top Sergeant.—The quicker you finish this detail the sooner you'll be able to rest.

Mess Sergeant.—You're getting what the menu calls for.

—A. B. Watac Camp Shelby.

The Gettysburg Address Available for Framing



"THE world will little note, nor long remember what we say here . . ."

Those were modest words Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg—and they proved wrong. For Americans do remember, still live for the ideal he expressed that day: "That government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

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America's 'Safety Belt'

Off New York city the Western hemisphere "safety belt" or neutrality zone, established at the inter-American conference in Panama in the fall of 1939, was set at the 60th degree of longitude, or about 750 miles out, says Pathfinder.

In general, however, the zone's width is irregular, varying anywhere from several hundred miles from the mainland at the California coast to about 1,200 miles east of Florida.

DON'T BE BOSSSED

BY YOUR LAXATIVE—RELIEVE CONSTIPATION THIS MODERN WAY

When you feel gassy, headachy, lopy due to clogged-up bowels, do as millions do—take Feen-A-Mint at bedtime. Next morning—thorough, comfortable relief, helping you start the day full of your normal energy and pep, feeling like a million! Feen-A-Mint doesn't disturb your night's rest or interfere with work the next day. Try Feen-A-Mint, the chewing gum laxative, yourself! It tastes good, it's handy and economical . . . a family supply costs only

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Try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to help relieve monthly pain, headaches, backache and ALSO calm irritable nerves due to monthly functional disturbances.

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800 homelike rooms from \$2.50 per day with bath, Broadway and Salmon Streets.

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