



CONTENTED HORSES GRAZING in a high mountain meadow make a picture to warm the heart of any outdoorsman. This picture shows the horse pasture at the first night's stop on the annual Modoc Tribe Ride. Some 20 or more miles from Alturas, it is at the site of Peppertine's

hunting camp, now owned by Randall Collis. The ride to here, up Shields Creek, is an easy starter for the journey that carries the riders all the way over the high hump and down to Mill Creek on a four day ride. This year there were better than 40 riders on the trip.

Modoc Tribe Ride... 1958

By **BILL JENKINS**

Just a month ago saw the men who took the annual Modoc Tribe Ride returning to Alturas after almost four days spent in the mountains, riding the trails to the high places, wending their way through creek bottoms and pausing beside lovely lakes.

As I recall the figures there were 52 names on the list when O. D. Morgan, Chief Eagle Peak, finally got them all set down in order. Not all of these men rode, of course. Some of them came up to the first night's stop at Pep's camp, eight or 10 miles from the starting point, for the festivities. Others drove over to Mill Creek meadows to join the party. And there were a handful who rode the pickups in and out with the gear, the food and the cooking gear.

A wide representation is noted on the ride. There are ranchers and cowboys, cooks and news-hounds, garage mechanics and game wardens, bartenders and clerks, businessmen and a sprinkling of executives. All are there for the sole purpose of enjoying themselves in the outdoors and in the company of fellow outdoorsmen and wilderness lovers.

The trip gets under way around noon on Thursday, jumping off point being a ranch some 14 miles from Alturas. Riders take off in scattered groups, heading up into the hills and Pep's camp, now owned by Randall Collis who proved a genial host indeed. The route lays along Shields Creek. Cattle graze along the clearings, the pines are warm and soft in the sunshine and ahead there is always the lure of the mountains—the Warners.

An easy ride, maybe eight or

nine miles, puts you into camp. A good horse pasture, well fenced, is there along with the buildings of the camp. Each man spreads his sleeping bag out under the trees, blows up his air mattress and then heads for the makeshift bar to take part in the children's hour. Dinner is cooked on a massive outdoor grill by the culinary artists while most of the rest of the members either take part in or watch a red hot horse shoe pitching contest which promptly gets under way.

Breakfast call is not too early. A night of yarning under the stars and catching up with the story-telling leave everyone well ready for a sound night's sleep.

After a hearty breakfast of ham and eggs and bacon and toast and fruit and coffee stout enough to grow hair on a steel spike the horses are run in and saddled, sandwiches are constructed and stowed in saddle bags, cameras are loaded with color film and the party takes off up the trail for Paterson Lake and the noonday stop. The camp gear is loaded onto the pickups and they take the roundabout way back to Alturas, out to Likely, through Jess Valley and over the ridge to Mill Creek.

The Forest Service sign that I saw says it is 13 miles from Pep's to Mill Creek. I am a great admirer, mostly, of the Forest Service, and wouldn't hurt their feelings for the world. But, still, I have certain physiological reasons for believing that they underestimated that distance. However, be that as it may, the trip is a beautiful one. The horses climb for the first hour, winding through strips of forest, crossing huge

meadows. You can look out and see basins stretching below you. Then you top out on the ridge and see Surprise Valley on the far side, the glint of sun on tin barn roofs and the feel that you are really up in the eagles country.

Skirting the immense stone rims, still clutching patches of snow to their bosoms, you work your way

THE COVER

Cash Lightner of Alturas was trying his luck fishing in Paterson Lake when this picture was taken. The occasion was the annual Modoc Tribe Ride. Showing the elevation takes only a look at the snow banks reaching down into the clear waters of the lake across the tiny lake. This picture was taken on August 15 at high noon. Cash didn't have any luck although fish have been caught here.

up to Paterson Lake, a tiny, clear, cold body of water with long fingers of snow reaching down to the water's edge. (See cover). Lunch is called for here. The horses unsaddled and allowed to rest and graze on the lush grass.

From the lake the party climbs still higher, skirting the Pine Creek Basin. Here one party splits off to go through the Basin, another follows around the rim to the outlet to watch the deer.

While we didn't see as many deer this year as we have in some others they were flushing like pheasants as we approached our viewpoint on the rim. One old four point buck with a rack that would put him well into the record class, almost ran down the tied horses and a band of does and fawns did burst through the tethered group of horses.

Those of us in the advance party stationed ourselves in the rocks above the gap in the rim and waited. Soon we could pick out the forms of running deer far below in the Basin as the deer spooked ahead of the riders. A magnificent sight. This country is all game preserve and the big bucks have really got moss on their horns.

From the high rim the party drops down a steep slope to the wandering little Mill Creek, riding through immense thickets of skunk cabbage. Does hide their fawns here and you can almost step on one of the little fellows without seeing him.

A few miles after you hit the comparative level you find yourself at Mill Creek meadows and home camp. Here there is a big horse pasture with a catch pen, the fence mended and tight, the

grass lush and the trees shading one of the prettiest little streams in the West. Camp is made here Friday night, the party staying over all day Saturday.

There is plenty to do. A horse-shoe pitching court is soon laid out and the game is on. Fishermen wander up and down the creek. And the fishing was good, too. So were the fish. Others lie around and loaf. Saturday night sees a poker session in the best tradition. The food is plentiful and delicious. The air is sun-filled one minute and dripping with rain the next. No matter. It takes more than an occasional shower to dampen spirits on a trip like this.

Sunday morning a leisurely start is made after camp is broken. This year the party I went along with came out by way of Jess Valley. Another pretty ride through new country, a chance to tear your way through some lovely mahogany thickets and fir blow-downs and the welcome sight of the refreshment wagon when you hit the valley floor. Not enough rain to worry about.

Some slight confusion about transferring horses from here back to the starting point and the ride is over for another year. I emptied the blood out of my boots and hit the highway for home through a blinding rainstorm. Another wonderful trip with a lot of swell guys and through some of God's chosen wilderness.

Now all we have to do is wait another year and we can go again. Count me in.

(The pictures with this article were taken, mostly, during periods of drizzle. But they do give some idea of the life these fortunate men lead for four days.)