

"My Dream Come True"

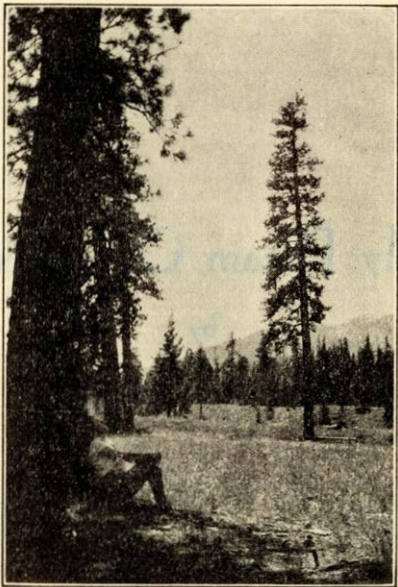
by

ANGELA C. JANSZEN

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"CONTENTMENT"

At Joe Murphy's Ranch on the White River

WITH
THE
TRAIL
RIDERS
OF
THE
NATIONAL
FORESTS

"MY DREAM COME TRUE"

WITH THE TRAIL RIDERS OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS

For years I have dreamed of "roughing it" in the mountains of the northwest, sleeping under the stars, eating beside a thundering stream — living as did the pioneers. The Trail Riders of the National Forests took us into the wilderness of the Southfork Primitive Area in the Flathead National Forest and made my dream come true.

Being "dudes" from the east, who had never experienced such a life, we knew not what to expect but were soon enlightened.

When our train pulled into Missoula, Montana, on July 10, we were met by Mr. R. C. Hammatt, of the U. S. Forest Service, on whose broad shoulders was the giant task of looking after our comfort and safety. He escorted us to the hotel where all members of the party were made acquainted and given final instructions. We were advised to make some last minute purchases in the

way of citronella and mosquito netting for, as Mr. Hammatt laughingly apologized, "the mosquitoes are two weeks late in the mountains this year and are very pesky."

After a good night's rest we were up bright and early to start on our great adventure. By bus the party of twenty-two made the sixty-mile trip to Monture Creek where we were met by Joe Murphy, guide and packer. The cook, "Wild Bill" Keegan, with his right-hand man, Whitey, had lunch ready for us by the side of the clear, rushing mountain stream.

It didn't take long to eat, make our choice of a horse and get started on the way. The trail to Burned Cabin, our destination for the night, led thru a burned-over forest area which was a pitiful sight, just acres and acres of tall trunks blackened by fire and silvered by age and weather — a ghostly sight, indeed. It was too tragic a thought to dwell upon so we kept our eyes uplifted to the snow-clad peaks in the distance. They seemed so high and far away but, we were told, tomorrow we would reach their heights.

Evening found us at the Lookout Station, tired and hungry. However, our hunger was to be of longer duration than we expected. Word was received at the station that the pack train was delayed three hours due to the trouble they had had with the horses. Tired and aching joints were for-

gotten by everyone in an effort to make the best of a bad situation, and with the aid of vivid imaginations and much "wise cracking" we soon had a variety of meals to choose from until the pack train arrived. In a jiffy that magical cook "Wild Bill" had some real grub on the way and we hungry mortals were filled to overflowing.

Before darkness overtook us there was much ado about finding the softest spot on which to lay our bedroll. This accomplished, there were ghost stories and tales of the West, around the camp fire, which sent us shivering to bed. For a time the tinkling of the bells on the lead horses kept us awake. The horses and mules were grazing all over the place and one wondered just how long it would be before a warm nose would be poked in our faces; but this fear was soon vanquished by slumber.

"Gracious, what was that, an earthquake?" A terrific noise broke the stillness and we were awakened to find it was only Whitey vigorously "tapping" the underside of the dishpan with a spoon to remind us it was six bells and a new day had dawned. In half an hour there was a wild scramble in answer to the call "come and get it" and did we eat a feast of fruit, cereal, ham and — to say nothing of flap jacks fit for a king.

By 8.15 we were in the saddle and ready to be off. Our trail took us thru forests of

stately pines and spruce; then above the timber line thru snowfields to a barren knob on which stands the Foolhen Lookout Station. All around us were snowclad ranges, and with such a view on which to feast our eyes we ate our lunch. After a rest and a brief explanation of the duties of a lookout a snow battle was staged with no casualties. This ended, we began the descent to Danaher Station where we spent the night, and a mighty cold night at that.

We awoke to a clear, frosty morning to make our way along Danaher Creek thru meadows of wild flowers of all kinds. The flame of the Indian Paintbrush was made more brilliant by its surroundings of purple lupin and yellow heather. Then there was the creamy mariposa lily with the blue hairbells and wild flax and a host of other flowers to make a gorgeous carpet, covering the valley at the foot of the mountain.

Big Prairie Ranger Station was our next stop and what a haven. A surprise was in store for us here. Imagine anything so modern as showers way back in the wilderness, fifty miles from a highway and imagine what a treat it was for us to take a warm shower instead of the plunge into an icy stream which was the daily ritual to keep us "next to godliness."

Altho we were in grizzly country we missed the thrill of seeing a live bear; how-

ever, we did assist Ranger Sousley to take a hide off the back of a cabin where it had been drying for weeks. He must have had plenty of excitement running down that bruno.

As the darkness was settling over the valley, we gathered around the campfire and with songs and stories the hours quickly melted into bedtime.

The ride next day was a short one and brought us into Murphy's Camp on the White River about noon. As this river abounds in mountain trout the anglers were soon at their favorite sport, but for the dreamers it was glorious to bask in the warm sun or sit in the shade of a giant ponderosa pine by the side of the stream and watch the march of the gorgeous white billowy clouds along the mountain tops. It was a chance to commune with nature and push civilization far back into the recesses of consciousness. We were startled out of our reverie when the call to "come and get it" rent the air. It was Nancy's birthday, and to our surprise there was a birthday cake and seven cherry pies. "Bill" didn't need a modern electric stove and neither was he a "runner up" for the best of cooks.

As the red and gold of the sunset painted the spires of the pines on the highest peaks we gathered, as usual, around the fire; but it was not for long as the following day was

to be a difficult climb to the divide. "Good-nights" were said and we were soon wrapped in sleep under the tall yellow pines which stood out in such bold relief against the moonlit sky.

Next morning, before old Sol had travelled far, we were in the saddle and ready for more adventure. We took our noonday rest and lunch beside beautiful Big Salmon Lake. Our faithful fishermen were rewarded by an unusually large catch which meant there was a feast in store for us that night when "Wild Bill" got to work on those mountain trout. Those of us who were less ambitious just lounged around and drank in the beauties surrounding us. The mirror-like lake, with its ragged shore line of mountains covered with pines and spruce, reflected in its depths the distant rocky peaks of many colors topped by fleecy clouds. Out of the stillness came the ring of a telephone bell and there on a tree nearby the instrument of civilization was hung. The call was from the Lookout inquiring to see if we were all safe and sound. That was just one instance to show how the visitors in the National Forests are protected by the ranger in each locality.

During the afternoon we were thankful for the expert guidance of Joe Murphy when we rode thru a beautiful forest of pines, standing in underbrush so dense we could

barely discern the trail. Camp was set up, that night, beside the rushing, roaring Tango Creek and the undergrowth had to be cut away to make space for the bedroll.

We were reluctant to leave our beds next morning for it meant the beginning of the end of the dream. This was to be the last day in the wilderness, and what a day it was. Up we climbed thru fields of forget-me-nots, then into patches of snow and out onto a meadow of glacier lilies and buttercups. There was a stop for lunch beside a tumbling waterfall, then up again to Gordon Pass, thru the Pass at an altitude of 10,000 feet where we tarried to look back with regret at the Southfork Primitive Area. Our regrets were shortlived, however, when the panorama, on the opposite side of the mountain, met our gaze. There was a lovely valley dotted with crystal lakes spread out at the foot of the snow-capped Mission Range. The descent to Holland Lake was at the rate of a mile drop in six miles over a trail of some seventy or more switchbacks.

On reaching Holland Lake Lodge it was with sadness in our hearts that we dismounted and said farewell to Joe and the boys and threw the reins over the saddle horns for the last time.

"Cap" Laird met us and we were escorted by bus to his beautiful lodge on Lindbergh Lake, where we spent the night. Next

morning, after a hearty breakfast, we again boarded the bus for Missoula. What a changed group we were. Those days in the forest had bound a party of strangers together as brothers. We were all "lovers of wilderness" with a common aim, that of preserving such areas as had cradled us for the past week.

As is the way with most dreams I had to wake, but will always have with me the memories of those glorious days and nights in the wilderness, coupled with the desire to ride again with the "Trail Riders of the National Forests."