

HIGH ADVENTURE

A ROYAL RANGERS MAGAZINE FOR BOYS

SUMMER 1984



HIGH ADVENTURE

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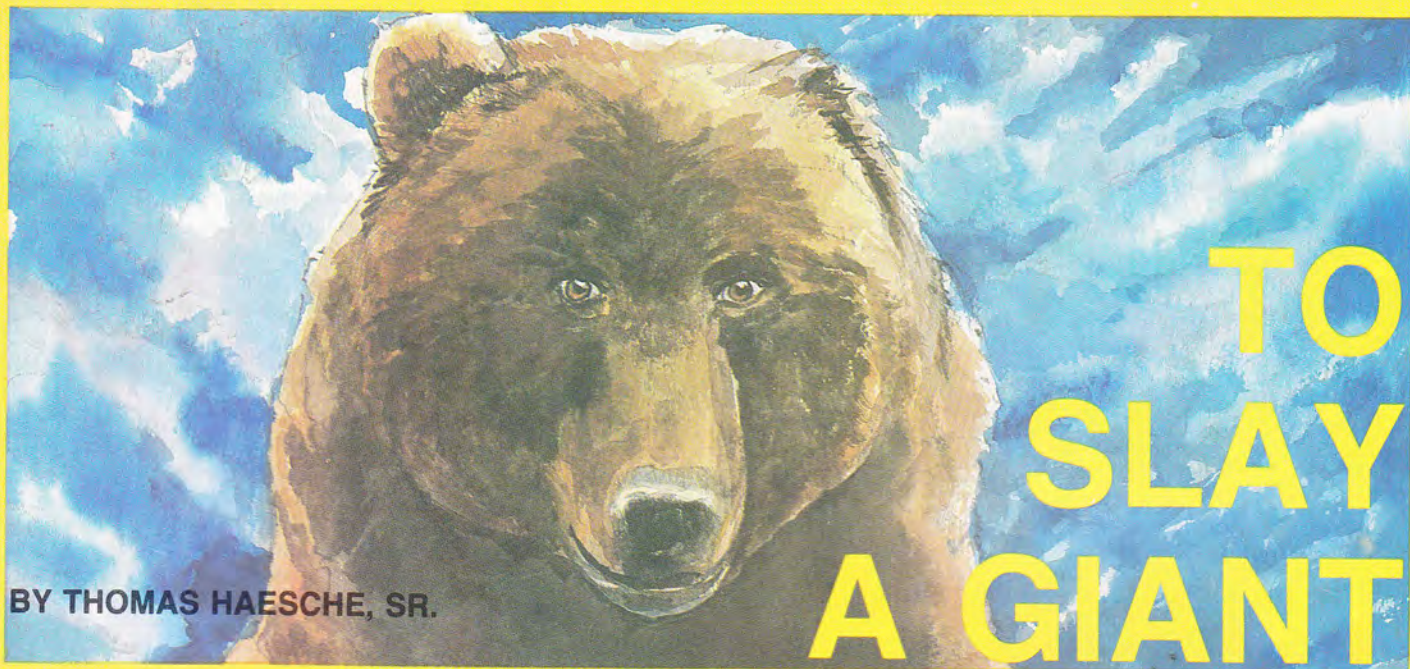
ABOUT THE COVER

A photo of Johnnie Barnes and Fred Deaver riding along one of the mountain trails near West Glacier, Montana. This is near the site of the National FCF Rendezvous to be held July 24-28, 1984. Believe it or not this photo was taken in June.

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BY THOMAS HAESCHE, SR.

TO SLAY A GIANT

Johnny Gray Eagle was one of Father Macauley's young, eager-to-learn Christian aspirants. A comely Sioux lad—not quite old enough to fight General Custer's pony soldiers—Johnny had a bright inquisitive mind that soaked up knowledge like fertile soil absorbed water. He had his father's long, braided, blue-black hair and wide cheekbones. But his mother's fair skin, soft gray-green eyes, and gentle nature dominated his features. The kindly, old priest had tagged him with the name "Johnny" because, he chuckled, "There are too many Crawling Turtles, Flying Squirrels, and Soaring Hawks for an

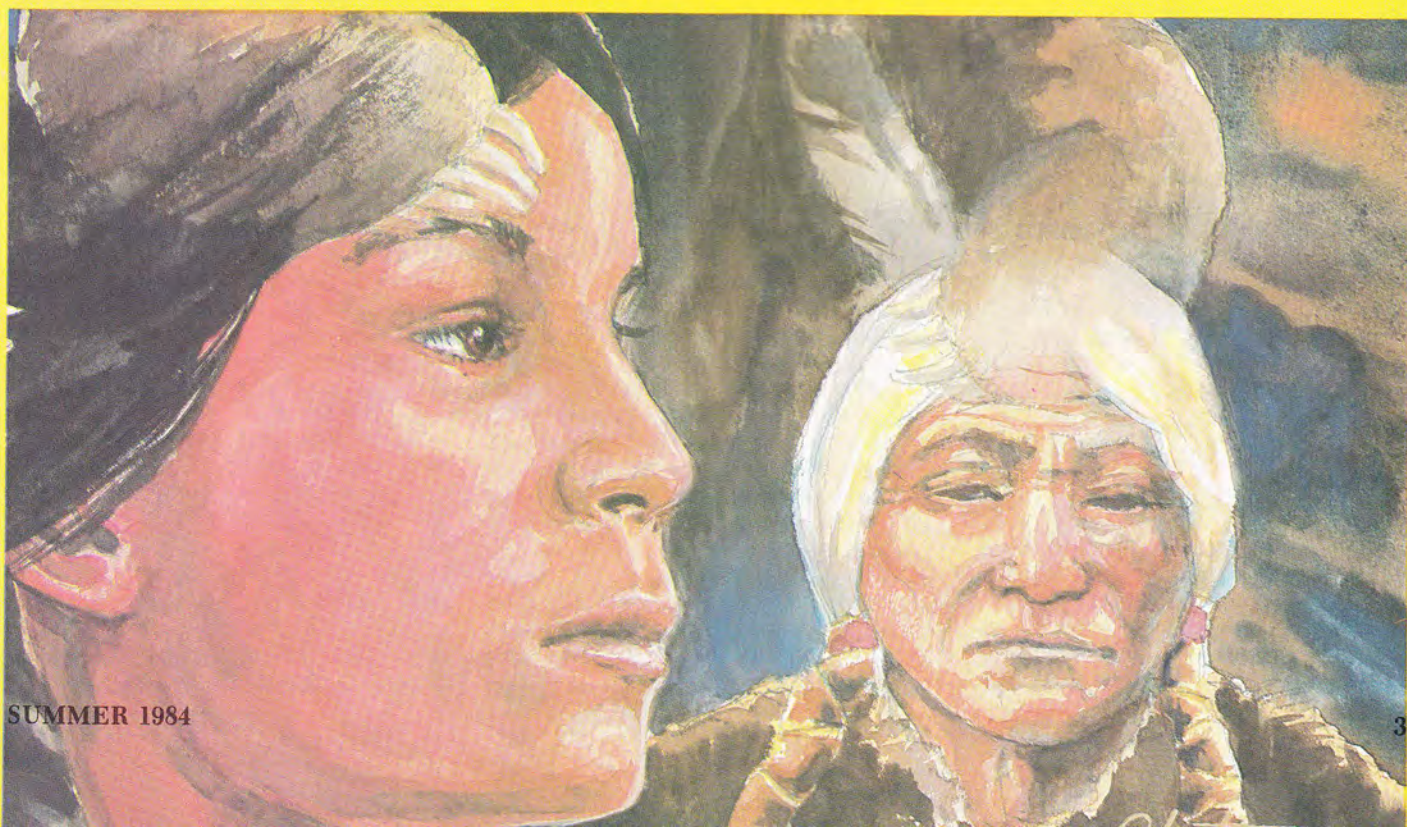
old man to remember. So I'll call you Johnny until my mem'ry rejuvenates itself. And that ain't likely. But anyhow, it's a good Christian name."

Johnny liked his name but his father, Warlance—a fierce, stern warrior—disapproved "because the Sioux are at war with the hateful White-eyes." Johnny's gentle, hardworking mother was happy for him, but fearing her husband's wrath, only used the Christian name when Warlance wasn't around. Right now Warlance was leading other Sioux braves against General Custer's army. Johnny, only fourteen, was the oldest of the young braves left in camp to

hunt for food and protect the women and children.

But Johnny Gray Eagle was called by still another less desirable name—coward. He was called that despicable name because they said he ran like a frightened doe while his friend, Red Feather, was mauled and killed by the brown devil who sometimes walked like a man. Johnny had tried to explain that the huge grizzly bear stood as tall as a moose. And that neither of them was a match for the growling bear. He told how the bear reared up out of a patch of blueberries while they were hunting, and was upon them before they could

"The brown grizzly must die, he stated flatly, before she kills our women and children." ►





"While the grizzly was tantalized trying to reach the meat, Johnny would plunge the lance into her heart."

defend themselves. The enraged beast killed Red Feather first. But not before the young brave had sliced off one of her ears. Knowing that Red Feather was dead, the brown bear turned on Johnny who had scrambled up a rocky embankment and hidden in a small cave. Unable to reach him, the bear, bellowing in rage and pain, had crashed through a hardwood thicket and disappeared. Later, when it was safe, Johnny Gray Eagle had buried Red Feather under a mound of heavy stones. Then, fashioning a cross out of sticks, he marked the grave, repeated some prayers that Father Macauley had taught him, and returned to camp vowing to revenge Red Feather's cruel death. Gentle Fawn—Johnny's mother—believed his story while the women and children called him a liar and a coward. Johnny had a burning desire to return with his lance and kill the growling bear, but Gentle Fawn forbade him. "Would you risk your life, my son, while your father is away? I would have no one to protect me or provide food for our fire. Wait until Warlance returns. Together you can hunt down the brown beast who killed your friend."

Johnny decided her words had wisdom. And, although he had to listen to the jeers and taunts hurled at him, he remained grimly silent.

Brother Mac, as he was affectionately called by some of his converts, whistled a quaint, little Irish ditty as he trudged along the rugged mountain trail, guiding his burro over the rough areas. He always whistled the same tune when he was nervous and apprehensive. And on this warm, mid-sum-

mer day he had good reason to be jittery; he was, once again, in Sioux territory on his way to visit Chief Lame Buffalo's village. Already he could see the smoke from their campfires rising like thin, white feathers in the blue sky. His nervousness stemmed from the fact that the Miniconjou's braves, together with Sitting Bull's, had recently defeated General Custer's pony soldiers at the bend of the Little Big Horn River. And the minister wasn't sure he'd receive the same warm greeting he'd received during previous visits. In fact, many of Brother Mac's friends had warned him that "some day you're going to have your scalp lifted." But the kindly old priest always countered by removing his floppy, black hat to reveal a completely bald pate and chuckling, "If they ever see their reflection in this billiard ball, what with all that scary war paint, they'll probably make tracks away from me." And the old minister always went on to visit the many Indian villages, to bring God's message. Many of the hardcore warriors—like Warlance—scoffed when he gathered them near their campfires to preach the gospel. And it was true that he could only count the number of converts on one hand. But he knew it was a milestone every time he baptized an Indian. He remembered a few in Chief Lame Buffalo's tribe who showed great promise. One was Johnny something-or-other and his mother. He was looking forward to meeting them once again.

Now as the sun reached its zenith, the minister—not a very young man—stopped to rest and mop his brow. At that moment, his small burro, Rachael, suddenly reared and jerked the reins out of his hands. She

brayed loudly and excitedly as Brother Mac tried to control her. "Whoa, girl—what is it? Here now, settle down." Then Brother Mac's footing gave way and as he went tumbling down Rachael turned and galloped back along the trail, disappearing as she went over a small rise. Perplexed, the minister sat there wondering about the animal's strange behavior. "Now what in the world got into that stubborn donkey? She never acted . . ." His words trailed off as a blood-chilling sound reached his ears. But Brother Mac only had time to whisper a prayer as the huge, one-eared grizzly bear bore down on him.

Chief Lame Buffalo—too old and feeble to lead his braves in battle—resembled an ancient piece of driftwood: his mouth, thin, like the cutting edge of his tomahawk, his black eyes brooding beneath the wrinkles of his hooded brow, and his hair, so white it seemed that frost was in it, fell in thick clusters over his ears and brow. He sat cross-legged by a small fire inside his lodge, a buffalo robe draped over his frail shoulders. Johnny Gray Eagle, clad in his customary buckskins, squatted on his heels across from his chief, his hands clasped together between his knees. The young buck's eyes were cast downward staring into the fire. He had been summoned by Lame Buffalo and was prepared to accept the chiding that was sure to pour from the old man's lips.

"The snow will come early," croaked the chief. "The icy dampness stiffens my old bones." Trembling, he drew the robe closer around him.

"Surely, you didn't summon me to speak of the weather," said the young Indian, placing some wood on the fire.

"My talk is not to cloud your eyes, Gray Eagle. I know you mourn for Red Feather. And I, chief of the Miniconjou, sorrow too. I say also, do not heed the taunts of women and children. The fury of the brown grizzly is known to many. You acted wisely. But I must speak of more sadness."

"Warlance . . . you have received bad news?" It was the inherent nature of the Indian to accept misfortune stoically. But Johnny's lip trembled, his hands tightened into fists. "Of what sadness do you speak then?"

"It is sorrow for you and others who try to follow the White-eyes ways. The Holy Man who visits our camp is dead. The women came upon his body while gathering wood for their fires. One would say that the brown grizzly killed him. This morning, when the sky lightened, his burro wandered into camp."

Gray Eagle's dark eyes blazed, his face came alive in uncontrollable anger which flared inside him like the flames of the fire. The death of a warrior while fighting was expected and even considered honorable. But the taking of an old man's life—especially a Holy Man—was deemed sacrilegious. Gray Eagle rose to his full stature, arms folded across his chest, a combination of anger, grief, and desire for revenge

HIGH ADVENTURE

boiling inside him. "The brown grizzly must die," he said flatly. "Before she kills our women and children."

Lame Buffalo poked at the fire with a stick, saying: "I agree. But there are other reasons she must die. The rogue bear has killed our cattle and even our ponies. And the game nearby is scarce. We will need meat for our bellies before they all flee in terror. The snows will come early, maybe before our braves return from the Big Horn. You, Gray Eagle, are the oldest of the young braves in camp. So I send you to track down the grizzly and kill her. And may the Great Spirit be with you. You will need wisdom and courage. Go soon, Gray Eagle." The chief closed his eyes, his chin resting on his chest. "I am tired . . . I will sleep now."

Johnny bowed his head to acknowledge the old man's words, an excitement building up inside him as he realized the tremendous task facing him. Then he returned to his tepee, saying nothing to his mother for he knew she would fret. That night, as she slept, he prepared for the hunt. In the frost-hung silence before dawn, a brush wolf howled at the moon. And Johnny Gray Eagle—restless—was already on the trail following the constellation of the bear—the North Star—for he knew it would lead him to Red Feather's grave. He was sure there was game in the area. And where there was game, he'd find the bear.

His breath was smoky in the cold morning air, and he knew Lame Buffalo was right—the snows would come early. As he rested, he studied the cloud pattern. A red-tailed hawk screeched high in the sky above the lake. And the surrounding woodland, bathed in early-morning sunlight, was alive with the sounds of the small forest dwellers. Johnny wasted no time. Having made a mental note of the direction in which a pronghorn had fled from a wolf pack, he followed a time-worn trail around the lake and proceeded to stalk him. Constantly aware that the bear might be stalking him, Johnny made good use of the skills his father had taught him, finally killing his quarry in a clump of evergreens. Carrying him back to the sunny glade, he severed a haunch from the carcass. Then, using a rawhide strip, he hoisted the fresh meat over the branch of a sturdy maple and secured it, making sure that the bait would be mere inches out of reach of the grizzly. Daring, courage, fleetness of foot, and his razor sharp lance would be his only weapons. Arrows were like mere bee stings to the huge beast. His plan was to hide behind one of the many boulders, lance in ready position. While the grizzly was tantalized trying to reach the meat, Johnny would dash out and, while the bear was standing upright, plunge the lance into her heart.

While Gray Eagle had been setting his trap, a faint breeze was wafting the odor of blood and meat to the delicately-sensed nostrils of many wilderness dwellers. They also caught the scent of man and natural instinctive fear warned them to be wary and stay hidden. But one of these animals,



"Suddenly the Sioux's blood chilled as he realized that the grizzly was between him and his weapons."

bolder, contemptuous of frail man, rose on two powerful hind legs to test the air, slaver jaws swinging from side to side, trying to determine from which direction the teasing scent came. Satisfied after a few sniffs, she dropped to all fours and loped across a deer trail to enter a hardwood thicket. It was familiar ground to her, having been over this area many, many times. Twice, she rose to her full nine feet to sniff and reassure herself that she was nearing the source that was whetting her carnivorous appetite. Satisfied each time, she continued loping at a fast pace.

Having cached the venison, Johnny piled some small stones at the entrance to the cave. This, to prevent foxes or other predators from dining while he was occupied with the bear. It was the sudden silence that alerted him: a red squirrel that had been scolding him from a branch of a conifer sapling had quieted, the chirping of songbirds had ceased, and the raucous chatter of crows in the tree tops had diminished until an eerie silence had pervaded the entire surrounding forest. The mid-afternoon air was crisp and abruptly, even a cricket, sensing an invasion of its tiny domain, folded its antennae, thus completing the circle of silence. Gray Eagle's hunting instinct, honed on the many times he had accompanied Warlance and Red Feather, was instantly aroused. Peripheral vision told him there was no cougar about to spring on him from the sheer-faced cliff. Preoccupied with storing the fresh meat, he hadn't heard the underbrush being trampled. But now, acute senses warned him that something heavy had broken through to the clearing. He turned very slowly, nerves tingling, eyes narrowed to

tiny slits, seeking out the intruder. And there at the far end of the sun-splashed glade was the prey he sought—a giant one-eared brown grizzly, sniffing the ground, slowly lumbering up to the tree where he'd hung the bait. Fear clutched at him as he suddenly realized that a grizzly at close range imparts an overwhelming sense of power and danger. And for the first time he realized and understood the terrible danger involved. She hadn't seen Johnny, possibly because he stood motionless and his attire blended with the wall of craggy rock behind him. Now the bear was peering up at the meat. Suddenly, the Sioux's blood chilled as he stood petrified with the realization that the grizzly was between him and his weapons. He carried only his hunting knife. She was standing now, straining to reach the tempting, juicy venison. Johnny's heart pounded against his ribs as the bear, frustrated because she couldn't reach the bait, bellowed its rage, lowered herself, and sniffed at the blood-spattered ground. She still hadn't seen him nor had she picked up his scent, possibly because of the strong odor of blood and flesh. Now she was slowly wending her way in his direction, sniffing and licking at the blood trail the slain deer's carcass had left as he carried it to the cave. There was no escape, the precipitous wall of the small boxed canyon offered no outcropping, no ledge to climb to safety. She was closer now, her huge head lowered, sniffing and licking. Johnny, terrified, fought the overwhelming urge to run, knowing she could outrun him. He sucked in a lungful of air and held it. Now he knew he had made a mistake by caching the meat in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



"The war cry of the Miniconjou burst from his throat as he hurled the sharp-faceted stone at its target. There was a full, sickening thud as the missile struck."

cave. She couldn't possibly have gotten to him if he was inside as before. And the carcass might have distracted her from trying. There wasn't time to remove the meat and clamber inside. Ever so slowly, his hand reached for his knife, withdrew it from its sheath. He'd die fighting bravely, like Red Feather. He thought about his mother, father, and the safety and comfort of their tepee. A prayer rose to his lips as a vision of Brother Mac appeared before his eyes. Then, suddenly the grizzly rose to her full height, dwarfing him. She'd picked up his scent and a horrifying roar sent tingles racing along Johnny's spine. Now she was peering directly at him, her massive head swinging from side to side, huge paws clawing the air as she advanced. Johnny, knife ready, stood in a crouch ready to spring. Then, strangely, she turned her head to the side as though her sensitive hearing had picked up the sound of an intruder. She stood quietly, listening. In that brief moment, Johnny, still praying, had a vision of a boy facing a giant—David and Goliath, the Philistine. Brother Mac had related the story to him. In a flash, he removed the rawhide pouch that hung at his side, slit it down both sides converting it to a sling. The she-bear was facing him again, drawing closer. Quickly, he selected a fist-size stone, fitted it to the sling. Then, whirling it 'round and 'round over his head, gaining awesome momentum, he aimed at the grizzly's wide forehead. The war cry of the Miniconjou burst from his throat as he hurled the sharp-faceted stone at its target. There

was a full, sickening thud as the missile struck. Emitting an ear-splitting roar of pain, she toppled backwards clawing wildly at the crushing wound in her head. In seconds, Johnny retrieved his lance and was standing over her, spear poised to plunge into her heart as she thrashed around and tried to rise. Suddenly, she was still and he knew she was dead.

His moment of elation was brief, interrupted by a commotion in the thicket. Gripping his lance tightly, he waited in a crouch, praying that the grizzly didn't have a mate. Then, to his amazement, Warlance stepped out of the dense underbrush and stood facing him.

An overwhelming sense of relief swept over Johnny as he gazed across the clearing at his father. Smiling joyfully, he dropped his lance to the ground and ran to him. "Father, it's you," he said, embracing him.

Warlance returned the embrace. His face was etched with lines of fatigue and much suffering but he managed a smile as he said, "It is good to see you, my son. It has been many moons since we went away, but I thought of you and Gentle Fawn many, many times." As he spoke, he peered over Johnny's head at the huge carcass of the grizzly. "Lame Buffalo told me of your mission. And your mother was worried. We all feared for your life but will speak of your bravery around our campfires for many moons. Warlance side-stepped Johnny and strode over to the grizzly, an enigmatic expression on his face. He walked around the dead bear three times, examining it very

closely. "All I see is a wound in the bear's head. Surely your lance, sharp though it may be, didn't penetrate such thick bone. And there is no other wound. I don't understand." He turned to his son for a reply, an explanation.

Johnny showed him the sling. "It is a simple weapon, Father, that needs only a stone and a strong arm."

"And where did you learn of this—this—weapon?" said Warlance, examining the sling with interest.

"From the Holy Man, Brother Mac," said Johnny, prepared for the usual homily on the way of the White-eyes. "From the Book that he always carries."

Warlance pondered his son's words for a moment, then said, "I, too, have learned something about the white man. Their courage in battle is as great as any of our warriors. They fought bravely until there was not one man left."

"Perhaps you have misjudged them, Father."

Warlance stood silent, again musing Johnny's words. "Perhaps there are other things we can learn from the Book the Holy Man carried, Johnny."

Gray Eagle suddenly looked solemn as he thought about the old preacher, then said, "He gave his life, Father—so that we would have a chance to learn." Suddenly, realizing that Warlance had called him by his Christian name, there was a new-found joy in his heart. Embracing his father, he said, "Others will come with the Book and we will learn many, many things." ★

A WEATHER SEARCH

BY MARILYN SENTERFITT

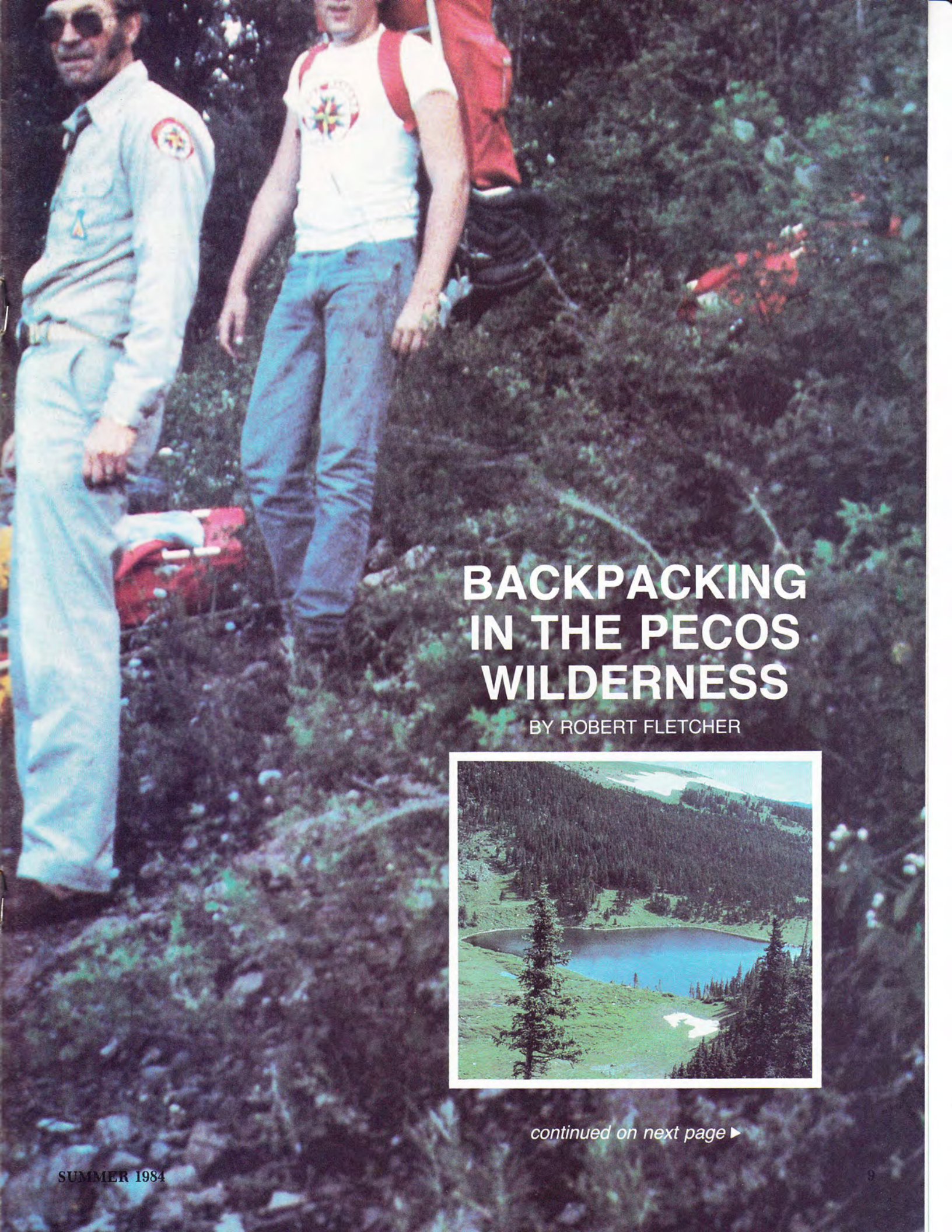
There are 15 weather words hidden in this word search game. You can find them up, down, and across. Challenge your Ranger buddies at it! Answers can be found on page 15.

The missing words are: WHIRLWIND, LIGHTNING, HURRICANE, DROUGHT, TORNADO, THUNDER, STORM, SLEET, FROST, SNOW, COLD, RAIN, HAIL, HEAT, DEW





HIGH ADVENTURE



BACKPACKING IN THE PECOS WILDERNESS

BY ROBERT FLETCHER



continued on next page ►



Feeding the sheep.



Along the trail.



Hiking the trail.



Evening Devotions.

Bighorn sheep eating out of our hands. That's right! It happened near Pecos Baldy Lake, altitude 11,440, and was the highlight of our trip.

Our group consisted of one Pioneer, four Trailblazers, and two leaders from outpost 20, First Assembly of God in Pampa, Texas.

The Pecos Wilderness, 20 miles north of Pecos, New Mexico (near Santa Fe), was our destination. The Pecos Wilderness contains 167,416 acres and is noted for its pleasant beauty and spectacular scenery. It includes 15 fishing lakes; the state's second highest mountain, Truchas Peak; 8 major streams and 21 tributaries. Elevations range from 8,400 to 13,103 feet

above sea level.

We arrived on Wednesday afternoon, and stayed near the head of Round Mountain Trail in order to climitize our bodies to the high mountain altitude (altitude sickness can be quite a problem).

Thursday morning we began our hike to Jacks Creek, 5½ miles up the trail. Three hours later we arrived at Jacks Creek and set up our base camp. The remainder of the day was spent in exploring and fishing.

Friday we hiked to Pecos Baldy Lake, another 2 miles up the trail. Pecos Baldy Lake lies in one of the most beautiful settings (as well as in one of the most interesting geological areas) of the Pecos high

country. Feeding the sheep, fishing, and playing in the snow were the order of the day. Bighorn sheep were introduced into the Pecos Wilderness in the early 1960s and have thrived there. Beyond the lake rises the great mass of Pecos Baldy Mountain, altitude 12,500, which overlooks beautiful Pecos Baldy Lake.

Saturday morning, after breakfast, we broke camp and began our exit out of the wilderness. We had an outstanding Royal Rangers backpacking adventure in the great New Mexico mountains and vowed to return again to explore other trails and mountains in the vast and beautiful Pecos Wilderness.★



ADOPT A PET

Western Style



During the past century some of the horses and burros lost by prospectors and settlers multiplied rapidly and became wild, roaming the western prairies and mountains. Ranchers considered them a nuisance. Professional hunters killed them for use as pet food. Today, however, they are under the protection of the Federal government and again increasing in numbers.

Since the wild burros and horses live on the rangelands and must share the same grasses with the cattle, sheep, and wild game animals, over-grazing is the result. The horses and burros have no natural predators to reduce their population. The only humane solution to control their numbers is by removing the surplus animals and offering them for adoption to private citizens as pets or for work purposes.

The Bureau of Land Management is in charge of disposing of them under the "Adopt-A-Horse" and "Adopt-A-Burro" plans. By 1980 more than 18,000 animals had been placed with private citizens nationwide. With proper care and handling either can be trained for riding or other purposes.

To obtain an animal, you must be a res-

ident of the United States, be of legal age, and be able to provide a specified enclosure to insure the safety and control of your adopted pet. You must also be able to arrange for pick-up of the animal at a specified distribution center, in an approved carrying vehicle.

Before the burro or horse is released to you, you must pay for a health inspection and vaccinations; about \$40. Also, you must pay for its upkeep and transportation to your delivery center; charges run from \$80 to \$150. You do not have to make a trip out West to get the animal; deliveries are made to eastern areas at specified dates.

After you receive your horse or burro you are required to provide it with one year of humane treatment and care, which must be certified to in writing by a licensed veterinarian. At the end of this year you will receive title from the Bureau. You may obtain title to as many as four animals per year.

Until you receive title it cannot be used for any commercial purpose, such as rodeos or rental riding. Otherwise, during this period you may train your animal for any other personal reasons, or just keep it as

a pet. After you obtain the title these restrictions no longer apply.

If during the first year, and before title is received, your animal turns out to be a problem that you cannot handle, or some personal reason prevents you from keeping your charge, you must notify the Bureau. They will assist you in locating another person who will adopt the animal.

In their booklet, "Getting Acquainted," the Bureau clearly explains step by step the care of your animal. Types and amounts of food required are outlined so you can estimate the monthly food cost involved. Other details, such as the size and construction of their pen or corral, are explained.

For families with the facilities for and interest in such an animal, they can be great fun and fine companions. The training can be a whole family project. And who knows, someday you may have your own burro pack-train for that mountain vacation, or run your own wild horse remuda!

For all the information you need, write to: Department of Interior, "Adopt-A-Horse Plan," Bureau of Land Management, P. O. Box 25047, Denver, Colorado, 80225. ★

THE BEAVER

by Robert A. Weaver, Jr.



"The beavers' reputation as busy and intelligent builders is well deserved."

The beaver, which was once found in large numbers in every state of the union except Hawaii and in every province of Canada, is making a big comeback. After being nearly trapped into extinction during the late 1800s, there are now so many of the furry rodents in some of the southern states like Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee that timber owners are complaining about losses and crop damage.

There are a number of factors which have helped this symbol of our pioneering past grow in numbers. First restocking by state game and fish divisions, along with a decline in trapping. On top of this, many of the beaver's natural enemies, such as mountain lions, wolves and bears, have almost disappeared. And finally, the animal is very clean and disease-free, so they have thrived and multiplied.

In fact, they are so clean and such a good source of lean meat and protein that many people are choosing them as a source of their "chuck roasts." In Utah and California beavers are even being raised commercially and sold to restaurants as special menu items. So perhaps someday we'll see beaver hamburgers.

This energetic builder which can stay under water for as long as 15 minutes has the unique distinction of being the only animal

that can actually change its environment. For although the ponds they create are for their own self defense and transportation, they also provide homes for many other forms of wildlife. Woodpeckers and other birds, as well as fish, ducks, and geese, all flourish and increase in the quiet waters behind beaver dams.

The beavers' reputation as busy and intelligent builders is well deserved. They usually start a dam by pushing a couple of logs into the deep part of a stream and wedging them into the mud in an upstream direction. Then they use the water's current to hold sticks against these logs. They continue building in this manner, shifting their efforts in the direction of the strongest water flow, while they gradually raise the water level. Their sometimes huge log lodges are also built in a systematic manner.

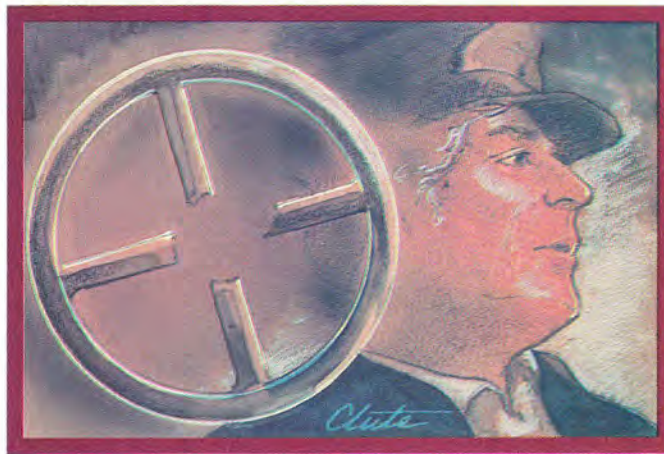
In building their lodges, beavers first select a high spot above the existing water level and then burrow into the ground. The animal heaps sticks and logs over its site and packs it with rocks and mud. Then as the dam grows in size and the water level rises, they tunnel upward into a new dry level. With the exception of an air hole at the top and the underwater entranceway, the igloo like lodge is completely sealed. The same animals may use the lodge for many years, and all the while they will be

adding to it.

The beaver is also a good provider and will build up a large stockpile of branches with its favorite bark, close to its lodge entrance. Then in the northern areas when the pond freezes over, the animal can swim out of its front door, collect its dinner, and return to the warm dry inside to eat it. Given a choice, the beaver prefers the bark of the poplar tree for dinner, and some cattail roots for dessert.

With their large chisel-like teeth, a full grown animal is estimated to cut down about two hundred trees a year. They have very poor eyesight, a good sense of smell, and an excellent hearing ability. They grow to be 3 to 4 feet in length and can weigh as much as 70 pounds. They usually mate for life and breed in January or February. About five months after mating they will have between two and four young. The babies will then stay with their parents, at least through their first winter. But, they usually take about three years to reach full maturity.

With the comeback of the beaver, they are now much easier to find in the wild. And although they may hide when they first hear a visitor, a quiet and patient watch at one of their unmistakable colony sites will usually be rewarded. So if you're interested in a fascinating few hours learning about one of nature's best environmentalists, go beaver watching. ★



The Broken Brake-Wheel

by Tom Dowling

The history of railroading abounds with the heroic exploits of men who made that history. Many are remembered for their long and daring list of adventures, but there is one whose big moment of courage is still remembered now, almost a hundred years later, at the funerals of railroad men.

It all began on a bitterly cold and snowy December 1887, on the Continental Divide when Long John Simpkins was conductor on the Colorado and Southern coal trains. It was a mean job, this hauling of gondolas to and from the anthracite mines, and on this particular night ten loaded gondolas broke loose from the engine and went roaring down a hill.

At the bottom, placed there for just such emergencies, was a derailer which would ditch any runaway and prevent its traveling along the main line toward oncoming trains. But this time the force of the coal-laden gondolas was too much for the derailer, and they rumbled through at great speed along the southbound track. A night express known as Number Twelve was due to leave Hill Top in five minutes. The gondolas would hit head on!

At this point Long John leaped into action and ordered three other men into the engine with him. "We gotta catch those runaways," he shouted. "We'll chase them on the northbound track!"

The chase began as a desperate struggle of men and machine against runaway disaster. As they moved at top speed on the track paralleling the one on which the gondolas were rushing, Long John explained his plan to the others. Whenever they caught up with those runaways he would climb out on the engine, get across the wide gap to those gondolas, and set the brake on each one of them. Once he

was off the engine the other men were to race ahead to a switch which would take the gondolas onto a siding.

At length they drew alongside those runaways and the engineer matched his speed with theirs. Then Long John grabbed a coalboard and made a bridge from the engine to one of the gondolas. Over this bouncing and precarious plank he made his way and jumped into the snow-covered coal inside the gondola. The engine then sped ahead and Long John went about the dangerous task of fighting his way from one car to another and setting the handbrakes as they screamed around curves and roared down the straightaways.

Meanwhile, the men in the engine found the switch and adjusted it just seconds before the charging runaways loomed into sight. By now Long John's setting of the handbrakes had slowed the gondolas enough that they took the switch and rolled harmlessly onto the siding.

Number Twelve was saved from disaster and a moment later went safely though. Long John's crew sighed with relief, but the men were startled to find that there were only nine of the original ten gondolas in the string. And Long John was missing!

Speeding back up the track they found that the missing car was overturned. It took the hard work of a wrecking crew to get the gondola upright. And under it they found the body of the man whose heroic efforts had prevented the wreck of Number Twelve.

In Long John Simpkins' hand was a broken brake-wheel!

When he was laid to rest, the broken wheel was buried with him. And thus began the tradition of placing wreaths in the shape of broken wheels in the coffins of railroad men. ★



“Suddenly, all the grasshoppers rose in a whirring cloud, swept into the western sky, and vanished, never to be seen again.”

suddenly large swarm of the insects flew away to the east.

“They’re heading for Missouri,” a leathery-skinned farmer said grimly.

Later, they learned that the scavengers had abruptly dived down into the Missouri River and drowned, mistaking the rolling brown waters for a field.

Missouri escaped; Kansas continued to suffer. Enough of the grasshoppers had remained to devour any new growth the moment it appeared.

A few weeks later, a tow-headed teenager came running to his father who was in the barn carefully rationing out hay to the livestock. He held in his hand a dead grasshopper covered with tiny red spots. The sad blue of the father’s eyes brightened.

“Those red spots are a parasite. They’re killing the grasshoppers!”

Heartened, the people shared their wheat and potatoes with their stock, permitting the animals to cling to life during the hard winter. However, the meager diet led to milk pails never being full, and only a couple of eggs a week being found in most

henhouses.

Spring came, fields were plowed, grass grew on the plains, leaves sprouted from the trees, and gardens were planted.

But the grasshoppers that had perished in the Missouri River had laid and left behind millions of eggs. In the warming sun, they began to swell. In late May the eggs hatched. Once again grasshoppers flowed over the land in a deadly flood. Now there was food for them to eat and the red parasite did not reappear.

At first the new grasshoppers had no wings. They were confined to the ground.

“We’ll plow deep ditches around our fields. We’ll drive the grasshoppers into the ditches and burn them,” the farmers cried at a public meeting.

Men, women, and children herded the marauders out of the fields to a fiery death. But those cremated were quickly replaced from the seemingly endless supply. Flowing like acid, the grasshoppers removed every trace of vegetation on the ground. Then their wings popped out. They flew into the trees and stripped them naked again.

Now there were only a few potatoes and a little wheat left for the pioneers. During the winter the livestock had eaten all the hay. Milk pails were dry, nests were devoid of eggs, starving horses struggled to pull plows. The leafless trees offered no shade as the June sun burned down on the bare earth.

Among the men, shoulders sagged, tears trickled down the cheeks of the women, children stood silently and trembled. The specter of starvation leered into their faces. Again they prayed.

Suddenly, all the grasshoppers rose in a whirring cloud, swept into the western sky, and vanished.

“What happened?” a wide-eyed 10-year-old girl asked her father.

For a long time the father, blinking back tears, did not answer. Then he said simply: “Only God knows.”

So the pioneers planted once again, watching the sky all the while. Despite the short summer, the season produced a bountiful harvest. It was almost as if they were receiving compensation for enduring their Job-like trial and they gathered in their harvest thankfully.

And the grasshoppers never returned.★

HIGH ADVENTURE

THIS ISSUE'S FUNNIEST JOKES

- Q.** What did one candle say
to the other candle?
A. These birthday parties
are burning me up.

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA

Long John Silver: "What did
the parrot say when he wanted a frog?"
Bluebeard: "Polly wants a croaker."

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA

COMEDY CORNER



ANSWER TO WEATHER SEARCH from pg. 7



John: "What did the baby bird say when
he saw an orange in his nest?"

Tom: "I don't know."

John: "Look at the orange marmalade."

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA

"But Johnny," said the lad's mother as
she bathed the lumps on his head, "when
those bad little boys threw rocks at you,
why didn't you come and get me?"

"Aw, Ma," he shrugged, "it wouldn't have
done any good. You can't hit the side of
the house."

Joseph Lozanoff
Johnstown, PA

Pat: "What is the difference between a pill
and a hill?"

Matt: "A hill is hard to get up and a pill
is hard to get down."

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA



The human brain is wonderful. It starts
working the moment you awake in the
morning and doesn't stop until you are
called on in class.

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA

"Does your umbrella leak like this all the
time?"

"No, only when it rains."

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA

"I haven't slept for days."

"Why Not?"

"I dunno . . . maybe because I sleep
nights."

Joseph Lozanoff
Johnstown, PA

"How did you find the weather while you
were away?"

"Oh, I just went outside and there it was."

Henry Leabo
Tehachapi, CA



The Deadly Plague

BY WALTER NOON

The morning of August 9, 1874, dawned rosy and cool in the Fairview district of western Brown County, Kansas. There was not the slightest hint in the air that the pioneers living on the area's rich rolling plains would soon be face to face with the terrifying specter of salvation.

In fact, as the men tended the fields and the women sewed warm clothes against the coming cold weather, they felt great pride in the abundant harvest of crops soon to be taken.

One sinewy farmer gazed over his field of corn. The stalks boasted of heavy ears, now in the milk stage.

"Come Thanksgiving the corn cribs will be bursting," he murmured.

He patted his 14-year-old son on the back with his deeply calloused hand. The boy smiled. Proudly he ran the fingertips of his left hand over his own callouses in the palm of his right.

By midafternoon the day had grown hot. Those working the earth thought fondly of long swallows of cool well water. They looked up, mopping perspiration from their brows with red bandanas. A huge white cloud suddenly appeared in the western sky. It grew, boiling into what seemed a thunderhead bringing rain to nourish the crops and cool the air.

But, as they squinted at the cloud and

licked their parched lips, other thoughts occurred.

"That cloud is moving mighty fast . . . too fast," one of them said softly. A puzzled frown creased his forehead.

Then the cloud began turning an ominous, glistening brown. As the fuming mass bore down on Fairview, the air remained peculiarly calm, almost without a sound.

"Flowing
like acid,
the grasshoppers
removed every
trace of
vegetation
on the
ground."

The cloud grew until it blotted out the sun. The air turned cold and gray. With a great roaring commotion, the raging brown bulk swept over the farmers. It stopped, hovered over them for a fateful moment, then exploded into what looked like millions of pieces of brass. The pieces showered down, covering the earth, the trees, the crops. Then purposefully, the pieces began

to move. The cloud had not consisted of raindrops, but of hundreds, thousands, millions of grasshoppers. . . hungry grasshoppers!

The insects set about devouring everything. People rushed into the fields. They tried to save the corn by cutting and shocking it right there. But the grasshoppers drove into the shocks and consumed the corn; blades, ears, everything. They tried to chase the creatures from their gardens, but they ate everything, even digging radishes out of the ground. They tried to shake them from the trees, but the trees were soon as bare as in winter. In a few days, nothing remained in the fields or gardens but a few stems of weeds.

The people took stock. The hay had already been put up and was too dry to be eaten by the insects. The wheat had been harvested and stored in bins. The potatoes lay deep under the ground, too deep for the ravagers. Pumpkins had survived the onslaught, too, for the shells were too tough for the grasshoppers to cut through.

The hay and wheat might enable the horses and cattle to live through the winter. Brood sows would be spared, but the shoats would be slaughtered and the meat smoked or salted down. The people steeled themselves to endure a winter of hunger.

Many of the people prayed!

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