

Torrance Herald

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THE HERALD'S PLATFORM FOR TORRANCE

- 1-Ornamental Lighting System. 2-Interchange of Freight Between P. E. and Santa Fe. 3-Western Avenue Bus Line. 4-Hollywood-Palos Verdes Parkway. 5-New School North of Carson St. 6-Aviation Field. 7-Co-operation of All Torrance People, Firms, Industries and Other Agencies, to Induce Torrance Workmen to Live in Torrance. 8-Adoption and carrying out of a well-conceived city plan to guide the growth and development of Torrance. 9-The conduct of All Local Affairs in a spirit of Neighborly Friendliness and Constructive Co-operation to the End That the Peace and Prosperity of All May Be Encouraged by an Alert Civic Consciousness and Patriotism.

A Stranger in the Forest

By JOHN TWEEDDALE OF TORRANCE

With a smooth, steady swish our powerful eight cylinder car rolled along the highway. A devious freshness indicative of an early mid-summer morn lay in glistening splendor over lawns, trees and flowers, while a magnificent array of blooming orange, lemon and avocado trees, filled the quiet air with an exquisite fragrance.

In the distance, standing clear against the infinite blue like a mighty sentinel of bygone ages, rose the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada range, and even as our enraptured gaze rested upon them, a faint glow, slowly mantled the eastern horizon, and luminous rays of golden light tinged the purple hills with the sublime beauty of a new born day.

On and on, like unto a winged mercury in the far-flung regions of boundless space, we flew; the great pristine uplift drawing ever towards us, until finally we began to ascend its lower reaches, leaving the broad valley, a vast carpet of luxuriant growth, far below.

We had often planned just such a trip; Dick, Ning Po, my faithful Chinese house servant, and I, but always before that indefinite thing, sometimes designated as fate, found a way to intervene before our arrangements were completed, and time rolled swiftly down the long avenue of anticipation, past gleaming portals of realization, and into the gloomy precincts of disappointment, until at last, panicked like unto a knight of olden time, came opportunity and with gauntleted hand pointed the way.

And now, actually on the road and nearing our goal, all doubts about the long expected sojourn in the depths of that well beloved, primeval wonderland, were at an end. Well might our weary souls, seared by the interminable strife and turmoil of a great city, overflow, with renewed hope and eager expectancy.

Our objective, a heavily timbered canyon on the westerly side of the range came into view shortly before the sun had reached the zenith. Turning off the state highway we passed over a cattle guard and found ourselves on a splendid dirt road cut along the precipitous sides of a deep arroyo through which flowed a living stream of cool clear water.

Soon the leafy verdure of magnificent oak and sycamore trees cast their welcome shade over us; a gorgeous array of multi-colored wild flowers, delicately graceful ferns, and painted rocks greeted us, creating a picture none could portray, save one upon whose palette was combined the marvelous shades of a sublime inspiration, and whose brush was guided by the divine hand of the Supreme Artist.

From a nearby thicket of dwarf live oaks came the melodious undulating notes of a wild mockingbird's song, mingled with the musical hum of a swarm of honey bees busily engaged in extracting the golden nectar from an endless array of perfumed fountains of nature's primordial design.

Here in this "garden of the gods" where phantom queens of the forest, robed in silvery moonbeams dance through the live-long night, to the melody of a whippoorwill's lay; here in a grassy dale, beneath an evergreen canopy of great pine and fir trees, where one might eternally live and commune with the elfin spirits, our car was parked.

My ever smiling Ning Po, indispensable man of all work, crawled stiffly out of the jumble of camp supplies under which he was almost buried, and promptly proceeded to unload them; the sleeping and cook tents rose as if by magic under his deft hand and before the sun had closed the shining gates of day, our primitive home was in perfect working order, and Ning Po busy with the evening meal.

This disposed of Dick and I made ourselves as comfortable as possible on reclining camp chairs. Meantime Ning Po, no doubt

thinking of the land of his birth and mayhap of some modest little Chinese maid in that far-off Flowery Kingdom, chanted an Oriental ditty in unison with the rattle and bang of supper dishes, which were receiving a thorough cleansing from the limpid waters of the creek.

As I watched the smoke from my cherished meerschaum rise slowly in the motionless air and drift in transitory whiffs of white vapor through garlands of wild grape vines, a peace of mind and body such as can only come from close contact with nature, invaded every fiber of my being, bringing renewed life and hope to a city-weary soul.

Silently the shades of evening crept up from the distant valley, driving before them lingering rays of light; wild birds fluttered about sleepily, calling softly to their mates from leafy bowers; a cricket chirped dreamily from a nearby copse, and a tiny hoot owl heralded the arrival of darkness with his most melancholy notes; fairylike moonbeams flew down from the great golden spheres in the realms of night and played hide and seek, from tree to tree, and bramble to bramble, and waded in careless abandon through twinkling ripples in the swiftly flowing stream.

About 9:30 o'clock, fatigued by the long journey, we all "turned in" and knew no more until the wild birds awoke us from a sleep such as can only come to those who are fortunate enough to be able to woo the fickle goddess from within the majestic precincts of a forest kingdom.

Our old standby for breakfast, ham, eggs, corn bread and coffee, never looked or tasted so good before, and from the amount consumed our larder would soon require replenishing. This, however, was Ning Po's responsibility, and as our minds were free Dick and I, lighted our pipes and strolled leisurely in the direction of the highway.

We had gone but a short distance, when somewhat to our surprise, for the region had been selected by us because of its isolation, we heard the laborious grind of a motor in second gear coming slowly up the steep grade. At a sharp turn in the road we almost collided with a heavy car loaded with camping equipment. The driver and sole occupant, a very corpulent individual with a very red face, brought his machine to a jolting stop and regarded us with a quizzical expression for several moments before he vouchsafed a greeting. "Hody folks!" he finally ventured in a deep voice, "do you belong around these parts?"

I assured him we did, at least temporarily, and that we were camping further up the creek. "Good," he remarked, "at least I'll have company, and maybe you can tell me something about the camping game, I'm new at it," he concluded with a grimace. I assured him we would be glad to give such information as we possessed. "The most essential thing to keep in mind in a place like this," I averred, "is not to light any fires outside of your stove." "Stove," he countered testily, "what the devil do I need a stove for when I've got all outdoors to build a fire in?" "Nevertheless," I answered as pleasantly as possible, "this is a dangerous fire area, the grass and fallen leaves are, as you can see, as dry as tinder. A fire once, out of control here, would be hard to stop, and aside from damage to the forest, would probably spell 'finis' for us all, for this is a 'box canyon,' with but one way out and that the way we came in. You asked for 'pointers' on camping out," I continued, "and these are the most essential, so for your own protection, for ours, and for the safety of the forest, build your camp fire, if you must build one, in a cleared space and watch it."

"That for the protection of the forest," he retorted, snapping his fingers derisively. "I live in the city, as far as my own skin is concerned I can take care of that, but so long as you fellows are nervous, I'll be careful," he added, as he brushed the red hot ashes from a large cigar and dropped them carelessly on the dry grass. Dick promptly stamped out the already smoldering embers, and I again cautioned him. "Gosh almighty," he growled, "are you trying to tell me I can't smoke around here? If you are forget it," he concluded with an angry glance in my direction. "Then do as you please," I retorted sharply, my temper rising, "you'll do it anyway. You're dead right I will, stranger," he yelled as we turned away.

"That fellow is a dangerous element in the woods, and a menace to our lives besides," I remarked trudging campward. A momentary expression of concern passed over Dick's honest, kindly face as he scanned the almost perpendicular mountain sides at the head of the gorge with the eye of a veteran woodman. "I must say," he finally interjected, "that I'm not keen for the possibility of being trapped like a rat in this canyon, neither am I strong for the idea of 'breaking camp' when we are so comfortably settled. My suggestion is to come down after lunch, to see our corpulent neighbor and try to drum a few don't on forest fire hazards into his head."

Although I felt our mission would not be productive of any helpful results, I consented, and as soon as our rapidly expanding appetites had been appeased, we strolled slowly towards the grassy dell selected by the stranger for his camp. As we approached his bulky form appeared, bending over a small fire, at the outer edge of an immense pile of logs, dry grass; brush and leaves, which he

had laboriously collected and piled at the stump of a dead tree. He rose as we drew near and saluted us in a none too friendly manner. Meantime miniature tongues of flame, fanned by a brisk wind, commo' in this region at noon, gave me the opportunity I sought, to again caution him about fire, and although he listened politely enough, I saw an angry light creep into his close-set eyes, and an impatient smirk spread over the wide perplexing face. "I don't doubt you know what you're talking about, brother," he finally said, "but I'm here to take a vacation which means I expect to be left alone to do as I please. I asked you this morning to give me some 'pointers' on 'camping out,' but if you can't talk about anything except forest fires and the like, I don't want your advice, that's me," he concluded, and turning impatiently toward the fire kicked the unburned pieces of wood viciously back into the flames, causing myriads of sparks to fly upward and drift away on the strong easterly wind. "Where you belong?" I said quietly, "is behind the bars with about six months ahead of you in which to cool off." "Say," he roared, turning quickly towards us, "you get out of my camp before I take a shot at you." "We are going," I retorted, keeping my temper under control with difficulty, "and if we return it will probably be for the purpose of dragging your roasted carcass out of a burning hell." His only reply was a boisterous "ha! ha!" which echoed loudly up and down the canyon.

"Just such specimens of humanity as that are causing irreparable losses to waterheds every summer!" Dick asserted as we walked back to our pleasant retreat. "Besides decreasing the recreational areas to such an extent that it will soon be almost impossible to find one," he concluded sorrowfully, as he surveyed the matchless beauty of our surroundings.

Aside from frequent trips to C—for provisions the long bright days in camp were uneventful, and passed with surprising alacrity. Dick and I spent much of our time wandering aimlessly through the vast areas of forest land, dreaming meanwhile of a time, in the long stretches of the future when business cares might be set aside and the fullness of life's sunset realized in surroundings similar to these.

Our blustering neighbor kept strictly to himself, and although we passed him many times in our travels along the narrow mountain trails, he ignored our presence entirely and passed without so much as a nod, we had come to believe he must be exercising some caution in his method of building fires, else calamitous results would have come ere this.

(To be concluded)

TORRANCE NOTES

Charles Schultz has been home for several days with the flu. C. W. Pendleton attended the auto road races at Colton Sunday. B. B. Cook, formerly with the Allen H. Paull Co. has severed his connections with that firm, and is now residing in Redondo Beach.

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