

DESERT CALENDAR

Sept. 18-Oct. 15—First state-wide Crafts show, State Art museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2—Pioneer Days celebration, Banning, California.

Oct. 1-2—New Mexico State fair, Albuquerque.

Oct. 2—State chambers of commerce trek to Bill Williams mountain, starting at Williams, Arizona.

Oct. 4—Day of San Francisco. Annual trek of the Papago Indians from Arizona into Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico.

Oct. 4—Annual fiesta and dance, Nambe pueblo, New Mexico.

Oct. 4—Ranchos de Taos Fiesta, San Francisco Day processional, Taos, New Mexico.

Oct. 4-5—Nevada State Pharmacists convention, Las Vegas.

Oct. 5-8—Eastern New Mexico State fair, Roswell.

Oct. 6-8—Navajo Indian fair, Navajo exhibits and rodeo, Indian dances each evening, Shiprock, New Mexico.

Oct. 7-10—Salton Sea Regatta power boat races, at Desert Beach, California.

Oct. 8-9—Centennial '49er celebration, frontier parade, Chandler ranch, Desert Hot Springs, California.

Oct. 9-15—Las Cruces Centennial fete, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Oct. 14—Greenlee County fair, Duncan, Arizona.

Oct. 14-15—National Highway 66 convention, Albuquerque, N. M.

Oct. 14-16—Mojave Gold Rush days, rodeo, free barbecue, Mojave, California.

Oct. 20-22—New Mexico School of Mines '49er Centennial celebration, Lordsburg.

Oct. 20-23—Graham County fair, Safford, Arizona.

Oct. 21-23—Tombstone Helldorado, in "the town too tough to die." Tombstone, Arizona.

Oct. 21-23—Dig 'n Dogie Days; rodeo, mining events and county fair, Kingman, Arizona.

Oct. 21-23—Papago Indian rodeo, Sells, Arizona.

Oct. 22-23—Twelfth annual Pioneer Days celebration; parade October 22 at 1:00 p.m. Twentynine Palms, California.

Oct. 26—Annual Rose Garden show, Valley Garden center, Phoenix, Arizona.

Oct. 26-30—Pima County fair, Tucson, Arizona.

Oct. 31—Mardi Gras, Barstow, California.

THE *Desert* MAGAZINE

Volume 12

OCTOBER, 1949

Number 12

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The trail at this point led across a mountain meadow with the Abajo or Blue mountains in the background.

19 Days on Utah Trails . . .

Some of the trails we followed were first trod by cliff-dwelling aborigines hundreds of years ago. Most of them had been blazed more recently by cowboys and the rangers of the U.S. Forestry service. Some of them were so dim I wondered how Ross Musselman, our guide, was able to find his way. Others were deeply rutted by the tread of thousands of head of cattle. Some were so steep and rocky we had to dismount and lead our horses. At other times they led through lovely vistas of quaking aspen and spruce, with Mariposa tulip and Indian paint brush peering at us from the leafy undergrowth that bordered the trail. For 19 days we followed these trails with an ever-changing panorama of red and tan and white sandstone buttes and domes and palisades in the background. We rode 353 miles—and never went beyond the boundaries of San Juan county in the southeastern corner of Utah.

By RANDALL HENDERSON

HIS WAS the Utah desert wilderness—one of the most spectacular and least known regions in the United States. San Juan county has an area of roughly 3,800 square miles—more than the combined states of Delaware and Rhode Island—and yet its white population is less than 3000 persons, which probably is fewer persons than dwelt here at the peak of

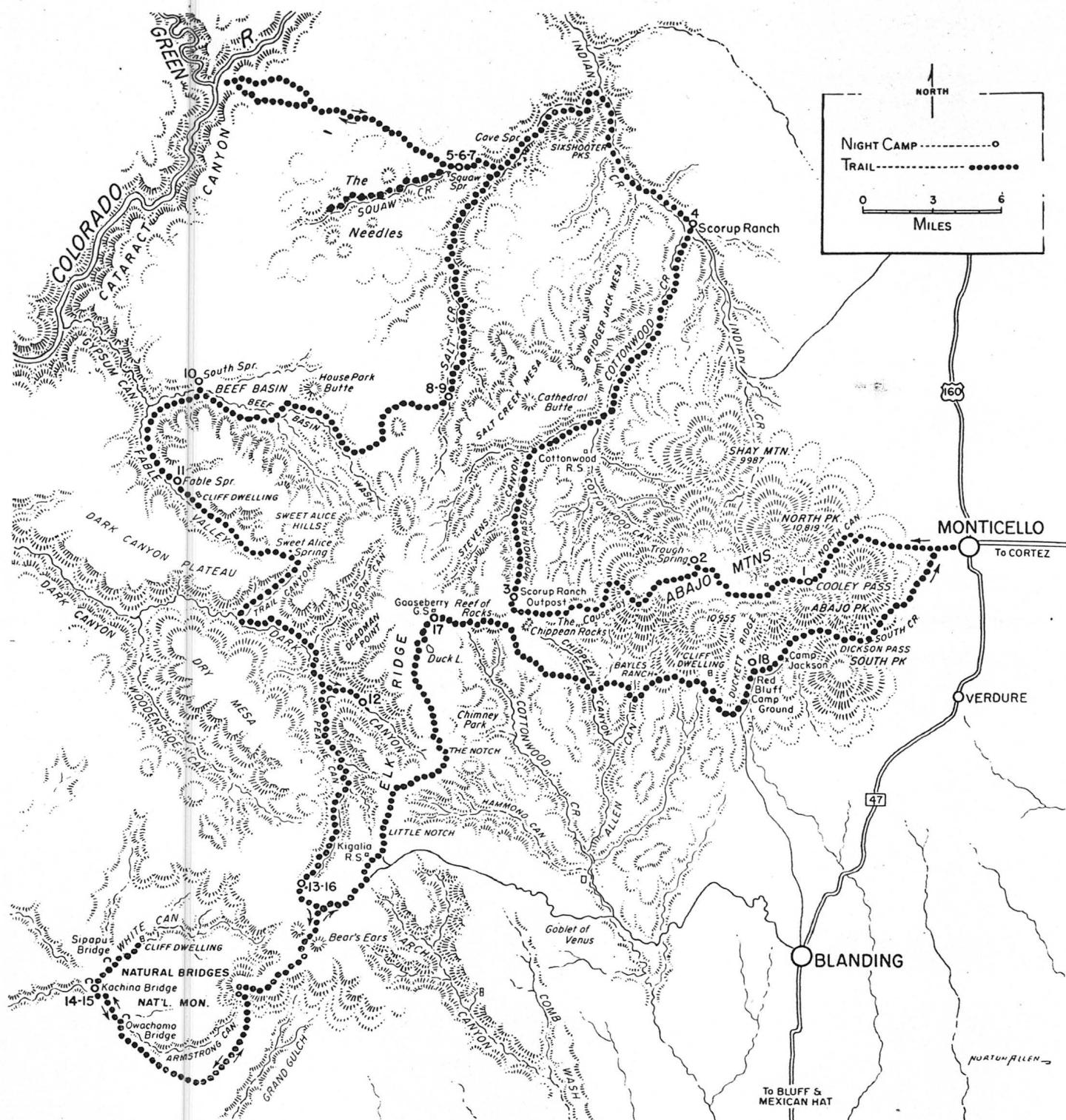
the cliff-dwelling culture a thousand years ago. There is no chamber of commerce in the county—which no doubt is one of the reasons Americans know so little about this colorful land.

From his guest ranch eight miles out of Monticello, Ross S. Musselman has been conducting pack trips into the San Juan country for 20 years. He probably knows the trails even better

than the cowboys who run cattle in parts of the county.

Ross invited me to accompany his 1949 expedition—and I was glad to accept, even though I realized the long hours in the saddle would involve some discomfort the first few days. I have long looked forward to an opportunity to get acquainted with this mysterious land of a thousand miniature Grand Canyons.

Nine of us arrived at Musselman's Four M ranch in mid-July, and met the four men who were to manage the pack train. In addition to Musselman, our crew included Val Leavitt, student from the Utah State Agricultural college at Logan, and Don Thomas, wrangler for the ranch, as packers, and Marvin Rogers, 16-year-old student of Berkeley, California, who was spending his summer vacation as a guest-employe at the ranch. Marvin's job technically is known as camp flunkey. But Marvin was no ordinary



Showing the route of the 19-day trek. The numbers along the heavy dotted line indicate the consecutive night camps—18 of them.

funkey. He is an Eagle Scout who in the days ahead endeared himself to every member of the party by his indefatigable work and good humor.

Guest members of the party were: Scott and Edyth Carpenter of Nutley, New Jersey; Clarence (Pete) and Faune Spang of Butler, Pennsylvania; Elsie Flexon of Pittman, New Jersey; Leonard Martinson of San Francisco; Nancy Flack, 13-year-old of Pasadena, California; Gary Justice, 11-year-old

of Berkeley, California, and *Desert Magazine's* reporter.

Before he came to Utah 20 years ago, Ross Musselman was secretary in charge of boys' camps for the Woodbury, New Jersey, Y.M.C.A., and his guests nearly always include boys and girls of school age who spend their summer vacations riding and camping with the Musselman expeditions.

We started with eight pack animals — seven horses and Kewpie, a little

mule not much bigger than a burro, but the best pack animal of the train. Kewpie was the clown of the outfit.

Here is the day-by-day record of our 353-mile ride along the remote trails of Utah's sandstone wilderness:

First Day

All morning we loitered around the Four M corral, getting stirrups adjusted, saddlebags arranged, packs on the animals, and last-minute details completed. Some of the pack horses had



Cyclone valley, a former river channel now abandoned. The floor was covered with a new growth of tumble weeds. Typical spires and palisades of the San Juan country in the background.

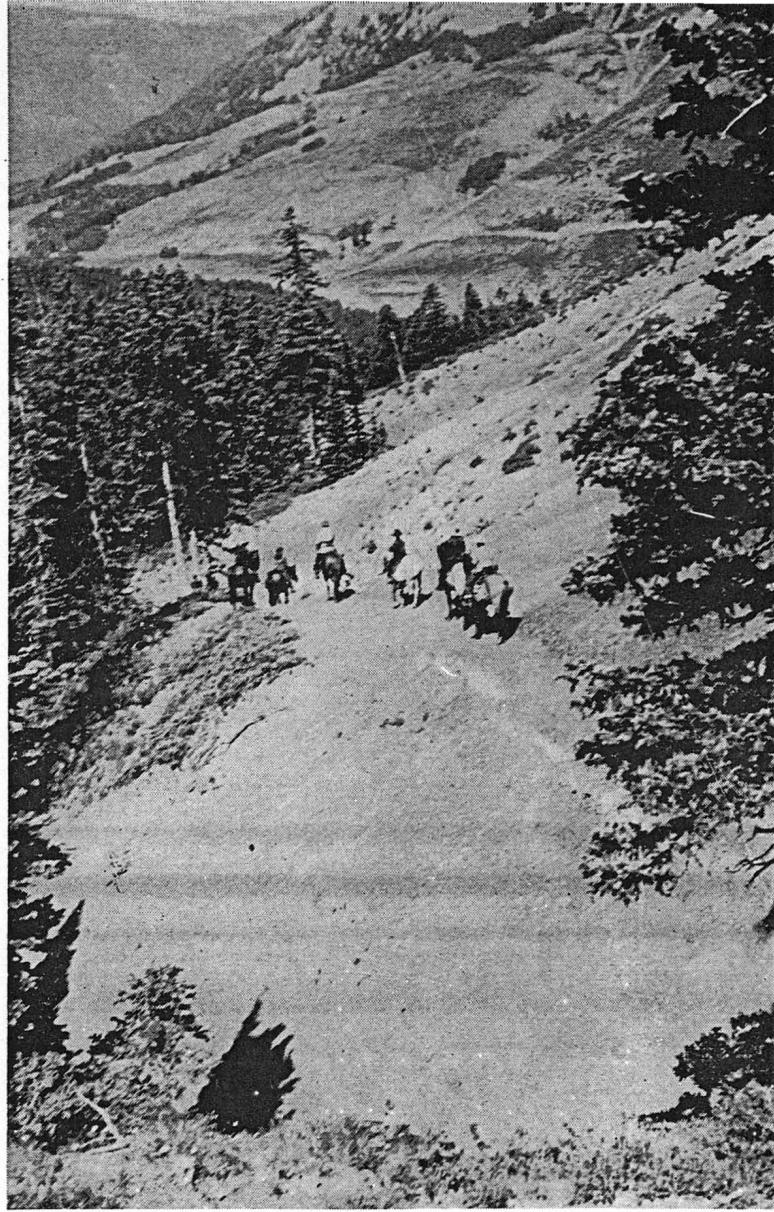
been on pasture for months and obviously did not fancy the idea of going to work again. But the saddle horses were veterans of the trail and Ross provided each rider with a well-broken mount.

We rode away at one p.m. and 2½ hours later stopped briefly in Monticello for last-minute purchases. Leaving the town we followed the well-graded road which leads over Abajo mountains to Blanding. Locally the Abajos are called the Blue mountains. This group of peaks is an island-like range rising to 11,357 feet from the 7,000-foot plateau on which Monticello and Blanding have been built. For the most part the range is timbered with aspen and spruce, but its slopes are checkered with great splotches of granite talus where nothing will grow.

We jogged along a lane bordered with dense thickets of Gambel oak, sometimes called Rocky Mountain white oak. The flowering season was at its best, and the dense underbrush was colorful with Mariposa tulip or Sego lily, the state flower of Utah, Canterbury bells, paint brush and wild rose.

As we climbed the oak gave way to aspen and spruce, and wild iris and columbine were added to the flower display. The trail led into North creek canyon where a tumbling stream pours down from melting snowbanks above.

Just before dusk we reached the summit of Cooley Pass where at an elevation of 10,600 feet we were to camp for the night. Nancy Musselman, 20-year-old daughter of our Chief, had driven up ahead of us in a jeep



Trail near the head of Indian creek where the Abajo mountain slopes were covered alternately with spruce, quaking aspens and talus slopes of broken granite. There was snow in many of the ravines.

pickup, and had a big fire going when we arrived. We carried water in buckets from the trickle below a nearby bank of snow. It was chilly at that altitude even in July, but most of the snow had melted when we recrossed the Abajos on our return trip nearly three weeks later.

We were in the La Sal forest reserve and the timbered areas on the range have been well protected. From our mountain camp we could look down on the checkerboard plateau where Utah ranchers grow beans and wheat on land that until recent years supported only sage brush. The annual rainfall in San Juan county varies from eight to 18 inches. Rain has been plentiful this year and big yields of wheat were being harvested.

One of the extra pack animals, car-



The mountain meadows were knee deep with grass—the result of heavy rains during the past season.

rying no pack, took off into the oak thickets this afternoon and finally got away from the pursuing wranglers, so our train was reduced to seven burden carriers. But that was ample. Musselman figures one pack horse for each two riders. The biggest item in the pack load was oats, three quarts a day for each animal.

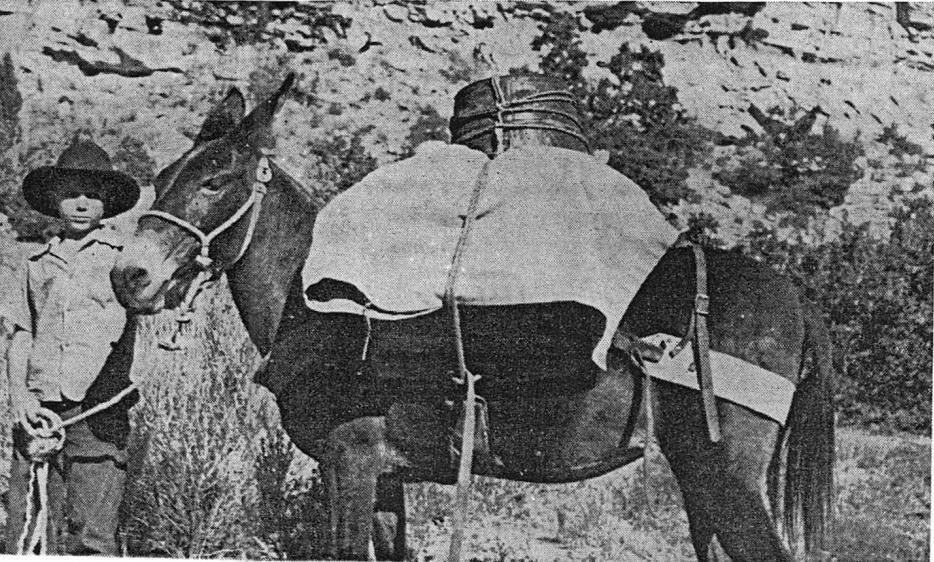
We spread our sleeping bags on a spongy mattress of leaves and twigs. Some of us had air mattresses, and later we were glad we brought them, but tonight the bed of leaves needed no extra padding for comfort. Our bedtime lullaby was the gentle swish of wind blowing through the spruce boughs.

Today we traveled 18 miles.

Second Day

The horses had scattered through the timber during the night and it was ten o'clock in the morning before we

Gary Justice, youngest member of the party, with Kewpie, the clown of the expedition.



and at noon we stopped in a sheltered cove beside a great snowbank to wait for them. A sudden rain squall sent us scurrying for cover under the spruce trees, but the sun soon reappeared.

Later we passed an Indian metate lying on the trail. In the days that followed we saw many of them—but we left them where they lay. One cannot collect Indian artifacts of such weight on a pack trip. Once Ross got off his horse and picked up a well-shaped mano—and I have that as a souvenir of the trip.

Late in the afternoon we reached a little meadow along Trough creek, a tributary of the great Cottonwood canyon system. There was a fine spring here, and water troughs for the cattle which run this range. The cowmen have improvised a type of trough worth mentioning. They hollow out huge logs, like dugout canoes, and then string them out end to end along the gentle slope so that each log overlaps the one next below, and overflows into it. Thus a string of a half dozen log troughs fed by gravity is always full, and will serve a large herd of stock.

We were in a little clearing sheltered by aspen, oak and Ponderosa pine, with a great white cliff wall towering on one side. Ross was chief cook, but all of us assisted with the camp chores—bringing in wood, carrying water, peeling potatoes. At most of the camps dry wood was plentiful, but there were times when springs had to be cleaned or dipping basins excavated to get clear water. Pete Spang assumed the role of water engineer and usually improvised easy access to the camp waterhole.

For cooking purposes, Ross followed the traditional practice of the range, where wood is plentiful. The method is to pile the fire high with wood, and then when it is reduced to hot embers, rake out little beds of them for the coffee pot, the skillet, and the stew pans. Thus the cooking is done around the fringes of the main fire, with each vessel on its own bed of coals.

Yes, it smokes up the kitchen ware—but it serves well. And I am sure it is easier on the pack animals and packers. I can imagine some of the remarks a wrangler would make each morning if he had to throw a squaw hitch over a portable camp stove.

With the fire going and the commissary unpacked, each of us turned to the important task of selecting a smooth place for the bedroll. At Trough springs camp we had to choose between wet sand along the creek, or a dry steep hillside. Each of us solved the problem in his own way—and if we made a bad decision we knew it

make the mistake again as long as we live and camp out.

For dinner tonight we had mulligan, made from fresh vegetables and canned meat, with canned plums, bread and jam, and coffee. We started with several loaves of fresh bread.

Today we rode 16 miles.

Third Day

We were up at 5:30 this morning. One of the animals went on a rampage just as Don and Val were throwing the hitch over its pack. The horse raced off through the aspens scattering pots and bedrolls as it went. Then a hard rain came and we had to seek shelter for a half hour under the oak trees.

It was 12 o'clock before we left camp. The trail led up out of the creek bottom to the top of a ridge where we had a glorious view of the country we were to traverse during the next few days. In the distance were the pinnacles of Monument valley. We were looking down on the Four Corners country, and could see the faint outlines of Shiprock in northwestern New Mexico.

Immediately below us was a series of white sandstone "cockscombs" towering above a forest of Ponderosa pine. This formation is called the Causeway, and is a spectacular landmark for this part of San Juan county.

Every hour or two the Chief would stop for a 30-minute rest. During the first few days of the ride these "stretch" periods were most welcome to those of us who had done little riding in recent years.

During the afternoon the trail led across a lovely mountain meadow fringed with pines. Among the trees ferns were growing as high as the horses' backs. Then the forest changed to aspens, with more ferns. Toward evening the trail led down into a broad valley of pasture lands. We saw a deer on the opposite hillside. The valley is called Mormon Pasture.

Our camp that night was near an old log house, where a generous flow of spring water was piped out to a corral. This cattle camp is said to have been established in the nineties by Mormon ranchers, but more recently has been acquired by the Al Scorup cattle interests.

Bordering the valley are great bluffs of red sandstone, with pinyon and juniper growing on the ledges and wherever they can obtain a root-hold. At an altitude of 7,000 feet, the night was cool and there was ample space for the bedrolls out in the pasture.

Around the edge of the pasture were wild gooseberry bushes laden with ripe fruit. No doubt Ross Musselman could make good gooseberry pies—but not with the equipment we had in this pack train.



Ross Musselman, who has been riding the Utah trails for 20 years.

Scorup's cowboys use this camp occasionally. A jeep was standing beside the log cabin. Cattlemen are using these cars more and more. They are useful for hauling supplies in the open country. But they do not take the place of the cowboy's pony when it comes to rounding up cattle in broken terrain and timber.

Today we rode 14 miles.

Fourth Day

There was dew on our bedrolls when we awakened at five o'clock this morning, but the desert sun soon dispersed the moisture. For breakfast we had creamed chipped beef with the last of the fresh bread.

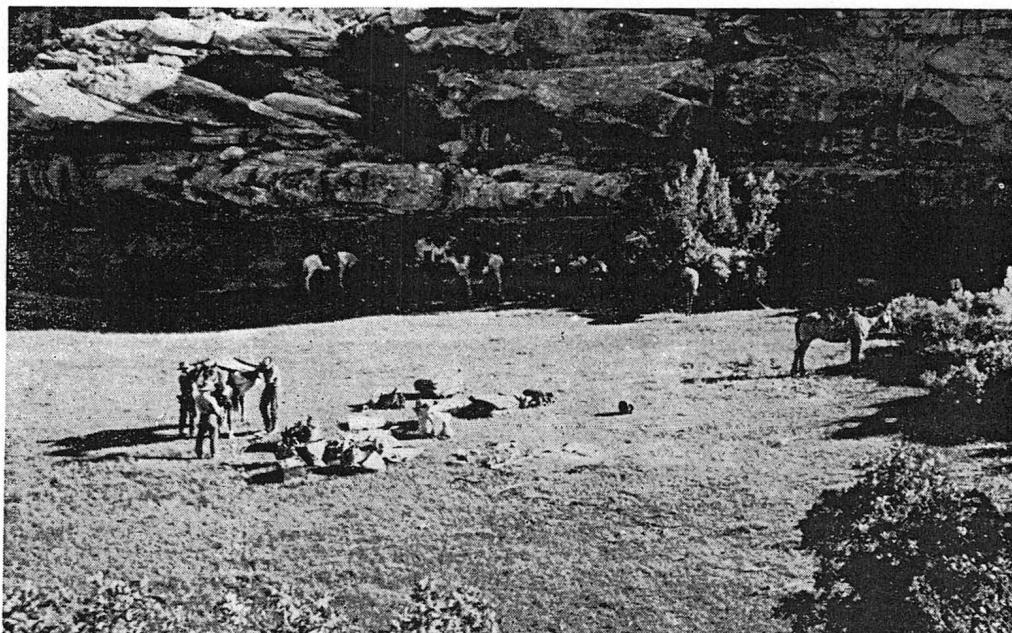
Then we rode along the creek in Mormon Pasture through endless fields of sage, sprinkled here and there with purple lupine. I am sure that lupine is the most widespread flowering plant in the Southwest, with Indian paint brush in second place. Lupine's

range is from sea level to 10,000-foot altitude.

As we rode down the valley, turreted walls of red and white sandstone gradually closed in, and an occasional Ponderosa towered above the forest of pinyon and juniper that covered the floor of the canyon. We followed the creek to its junction with Stevens canyon, and then down Stevens to Cottonwood canyon. Just below the junction with Cottonwood we stopped in the shade of a grove of cottonwood trees, and while some of the riders bathed in the creek others climbed a nearby butte where the slopes were covered with broken Indian pottery and obsidian chips. Many artifacts have been taken from the old pueblo ruins at the top of the summit, Ross told us.

Soon after we had resumed our ride down Cottonwood creek we passed huge blocks of sandstone in which were lodged sections of petrified tree trunks.

There were Indian petroglyphs on the walls near this camp on the grassy floor of a canyon.



Hard Rock Shorty of Death Valley



Hard Rock Shorty tipped his chair back to its most comfortable angle on the porch of the Inferno store, and allowed he might go up to the claim on Eight Ball creek and see how Pisgah Bill was getting along.

"Where does this Pisgah Bill stay all the time?" asked one of the bystanders. "We've never seen him. I don't believe there is such a person."

"Well now," answered Shorty, "Bill is still a lively ol' cuss despite his 70-odd years, but you may never see him fer he's very shy. But he wasn't always that way."

"Bill's been a changed man ever since he made that trip out to the city in the 'twenties. That trip really did somethin' to Bill."

"Yuh see when he arrived there the streets wuz full o' strange lookin' fellers wearin' yell-a britches an' little red monkey hats on their heads. Bill couldn't figger it out—decided maybe he had gotten into a furrin country by mistake. Finally walked up to one o' them funny lookin' clowns and asked him if he could talk English. The feller said a few o' them could, and what did he want?"

"I want to git back to the U.S.A." hollered Bill.

"Whereabouts in the U.S.A?" the feller wanted to know.

"Death Valley, out in Californy. That's where my claim is, and I wanna go back there right now!" exclaimed Pisgah.

"Come along with me, an' we'll have some fun," the feller said.

"So Pisgah jined the crowd, an' they played jokes on him, an' everybody laffed, an' they took him in a parade—an' finally Ol' Bill got it through his head these folks wasn't furriners—they was Shriners having a convention."

An' Bill was so ashamed of hisself fer bein' so dumb, he come back home and vowed he never wanted to see a dude again."

Today I got my first glimpse of a western collared lizard—and as far as I am concerned it is the prettiest member of the whole lizard family. Perhaps 10 inches long, of which more than half was tail, the striking characteristic of this lizard is its coloring. The head was orange. Then two black bands circled the neck, and the body was a brilliant green, tapering off to a slate-colored tail. In the days ahead I saw many of these brilliant-hued reptiles. Not all of them were as brightly colored as this first one, but I always stopped to watch them until they disappeared in the rocks.

At 6:30 we reached our night camp at the junction of Cottonwood and Indian creeks. Al Scorup's ranch headquarters in Indian creek canyon was just across the stream, and several hundred acres of cultivated fields are watered from the creek. We had been riding all day on the Scorup cattle domain. (*Desert Magazine*, Oct. '40). Al Scorup came into the San Juan country in 1891 as a youth of 19 with a few dollars in his pocket and grub on his pack horse. From that lowly start he has built a cattle empire that covers more than a million acres.

Nancy Musselman met us again with the jeep at this camp, bringing supplies that must last for the next nine days, for tomorrow our trail would lead into a wilderness where roads are unknown.

It had been a hard day's ride under a scorching sun, but we found a deep waterhole in Indian creek just below camp and the cool water dispelled all fatigue.

We were 10 hours on the trail today and rode 26 miles.

Fifth Day

We were up at 5:45 and had breakfast at seven. Then Ross and I crossed the creek to pay our respects to Al Scorup, on whose land we were camping. Although in his late seventies, he was saddling his horse for a morning ride. He is still a very active cattleman, and his intimate knowledge of the San Juan range enables him to direct its operation without spending 16 or 18 hours a day in the saddle as he did for many years.

We left camp at ten o'clock and for 11 miles followed a winding course down Indian creek. The spires of the twin Sixshooter peaks were conspicuous landmarks on our left as we rode down the valley. We stopped along the way to examine some petroglyphs on the rocks. This canyon, farther upstream, has some of the finest glyphs found in the Southwest. (*Desert Magazine*, Nov. '46).

We passed the mouth of tributary Lavender canyon, and then climbed a slick rock trail to Salt Creek mesa where we had a gorgeous view of what

is called The Needles country, a flaming labyrinth of domes, spires, castles, towers, pinnacles and monoliths that has never been made a National Park because it is so inaccessible. Against the towering cliffs the pinyon trees looked like dwarfed shrubs.

Then we dropped down into a meadow that led to Salt creek. The usual sage which blankets much of southeastern Utah was missing here and in its place was a great pasture of tumbleweeds. When tumbleweed is green the horses will eat it if there is nothing better. But portions of the flower structure dry into a disagreeable little thorn that both humans and animals avoid. When tumbleweed dries its roots give way before a strong wind and the plant goes rolling across the horizon, spreading seeds as it goes. We crossed through great fields of it at the lower levels of our journey.

Crossing Salt creek, which was now dry, we came to Cave spring, where a pool of water fed from seepage in the sidewalls is sheltered by a great overhanging cliff. This is another cowboy outpost. Faint pictographs on the walls indicated that prehistoric Indians had used this cave long before the cattle-men came to this country.

We waited here for our pack train to arrive, and then rode another three miles to Squaw spring, where a fine flow of water bubbled up through the sandstone floor of an arroyo. Our camp site here was bare sandstone, and those of us with air mattresses were glad we had brought them. This was to be our base camp for the next two days, so we brought in a big supply of dead juniper from a nearby butte, and sought what comfort we could on the sandstone ledges.

Today we rode 24 miles.

Sixth Day

It rained during the night but there were waterproof tarpaulins enough to keep us fairly dry.

We were up at 5:45 and went about our camp chores leisurely, for the day's schedule was to include only eight miles of riding.

At 10:45 we followed the Chief along a trail that led up Squaw creek into the heart of The Needles. Here millions of years of erosion have sculptured great cliffs of red and tan and cream sandstone into forms so fantastic as to make the term "Needles" wholly inadequate. In the gigantic palisades that towered above us we could find nearly any form imaginable. The sphinx was there, the pyramids, battleships, pipe organs, mammoth toadstools, and towers and spires and domes were everywhere. Pinyon grew on the ledges and in pockets, wherever it could find a toe-hold, and to add to the artistry of this mammoth fairyland

the walls in many places were streaked with patterns of tan and brown—the soluble desert varnish that rains had brought down from the capping at the top.

It rained while we were in The Needles and it was a disappointing day for pictures—but those weird formations probably will still be there for the photographers a thousand years from now.

We were reluctant to leave this gallery of the sculpturing gods and the sun was near the horizon when we departed for our camp on the slick rock. When we arrived at base camp the packers were trying to smoke out a rattlesnake they had seen crawl under a huge boulder. Eventually it came out for fresh air and was shot by Val. This was the only rattler seen during the 19 days. The natives told us San Juan county is "not good snake country."

Today we rode 8 miles.

Seventh Day

Six of us rode off early this morning for a sidetrip that would take us to the junction of the Green and Colorado rivers. The women chose to remain in camp to do their laundry—and rest.

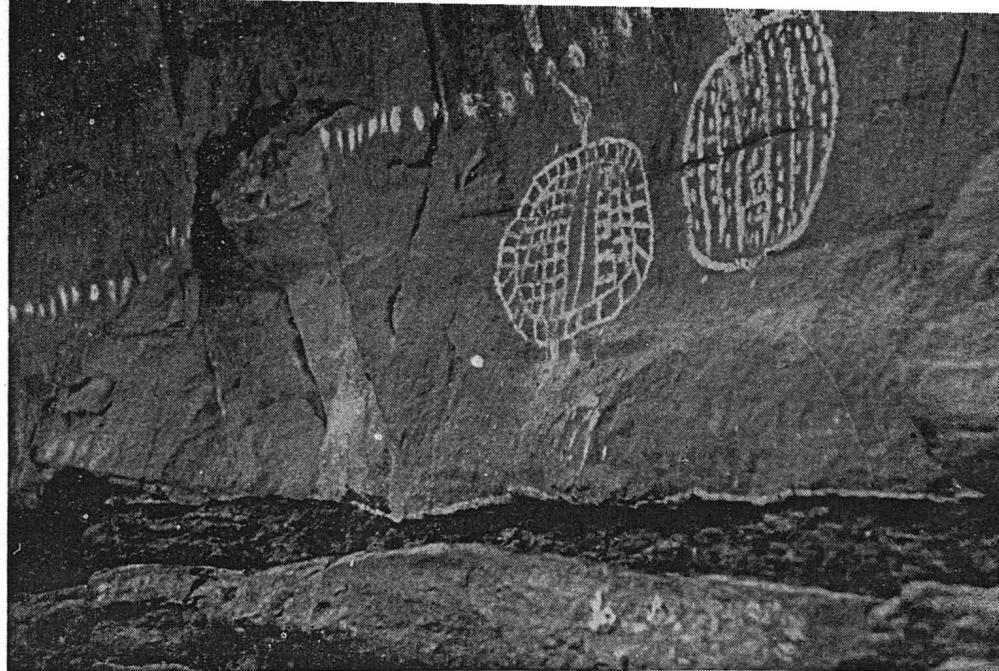
Our ride for the most part was across pinyon covered mesas, with an occasional shallow arroyo to cross. At 12:35 we reached the end of the horse trail, and then hiked along a ledge for a half mile to a saddle from which we could look down on the Y formed by the Colorado and its major tributary 1200 feet below us. This is the Cataract sector of the Colorado—where boatmen have encountered many hazards in the navigation of the stream.

This point is accessible only by horse and foot trail, and few parties have visited the spot. We erected a cairn and Ross said that on his trip next year he would bring in a register so visitors could leave a record of their arrival at this remote spot.

When we returned to the horses Ross told us we would take a different route back. Parallel to the Colorado and less than a mile east of its channel we entered Cyclone valley, a vertical-walled gorge that resembled a hundred others we had seen—with the exception that it had a level alluvial floor covered with tumbleweed. Obviously, it had been formed during some prehistoric period by running water. But the stream long ago had been diverted elsewhere and today there is no stream channel in its floor.

We climbed out of Cyclone valley over a grade so steep we had to lead the horses, and dropped down into Devil's Lane, a formation almost identical to Cyclone—a gorge with no water channel in its floor.

Near the base of the sidewall in Cyclone canyon was a 12-foot stratum



Above — Petroglyphs of ancient design under a rock overhang near the head of Salt Creek.

Below — These well-preserved pictographs found in a cave showed exceptional artistic skill.

of conglomerate that would provide a field day for a rockhound. It appeared to carry great quantities of jasper, and crystalline quartz and calcite.

Our return route wound through a maze of picturesque canyons. Once we had to detour a fresh earthquake or fault crevice three feet wide and apparently bottomless. When we returned to camp we learned that a rainstorm in The Needles during the afternoon had

sent a flash flood of thick red water down Squaw creek, submerging the spring. However, the runoff had been completed and clear cool water again was bubbling out of the rock in the bottom of the arroyo.

Today we rode 25 miles.

(This narrative will be completed in the November issue of Desert Magazine)