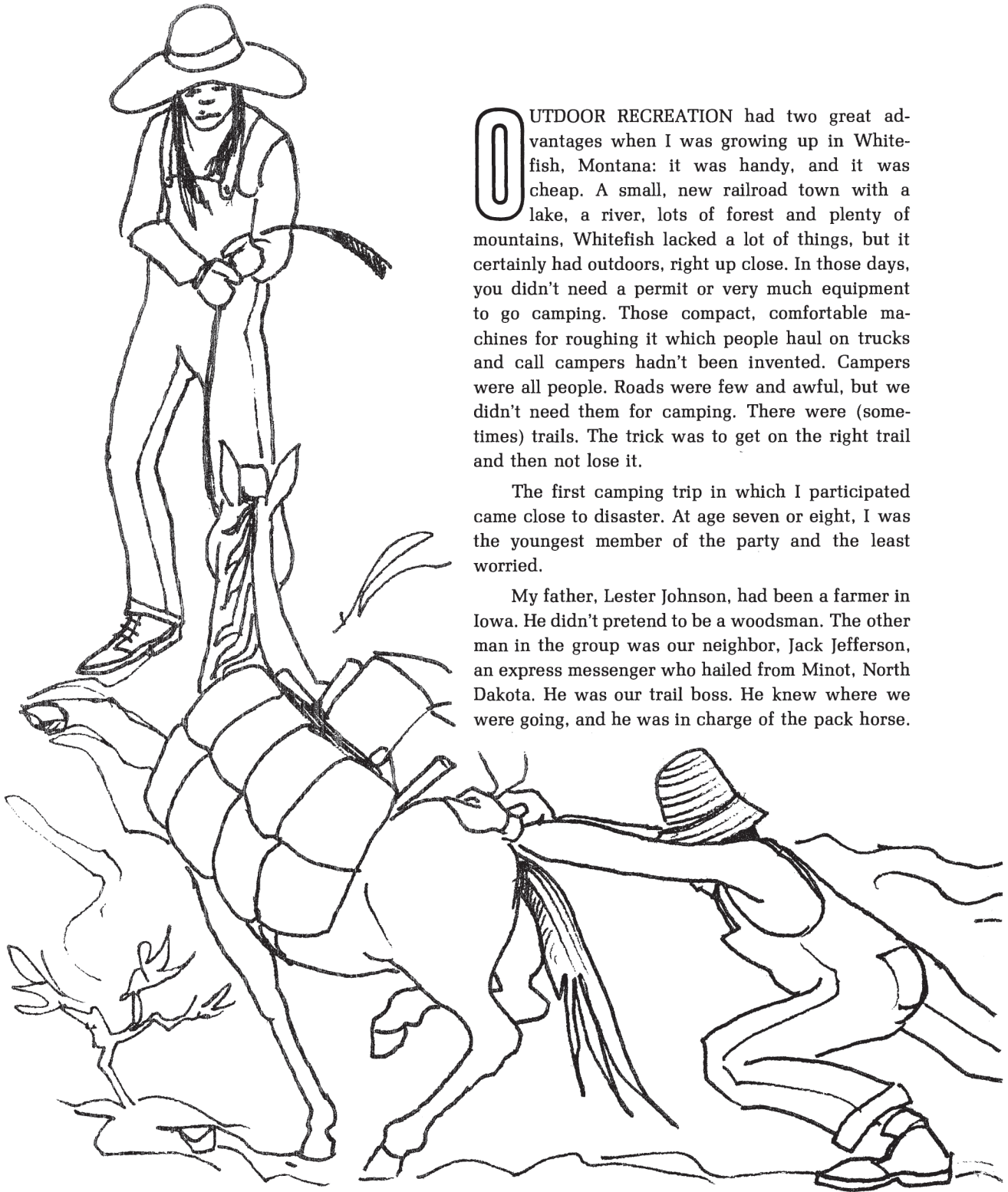


FUN IN THE



OUTDOOR RECREATION had two great advantages when I was growing up in Whitefish, Montana: it was handy, and it was cheap. A small, new railroad town with a lake, a river, lots of forest and plenty of mountains, Whitefish lacked a lot of things, but it certainly had outdoors, right up close. In those days, you didn't need a permit or very much equipment to go camping. Those compact, comfortable machines for roughing it which people haul on trucks and call campers hadn't been invented. Campers were all people. Roads were few and awful, but we didn't need them for camping. There were (sometimes) trails. The trick was to get on the right trail and then not lose it.

The first camping trip in which I participated came close to disaster. At age seven or eight, I was the youngest member of the party and the least worried.

My father, Lester Johnson, had been a farmer in Iowa. He didn't pretend to be a woodsman. The other man in the group was our neighbor, Jack Jefferson, an express messenger who hailed from Minot, North Dakota. He was our trail boss. He knew where we were going, and he was in charge of the pack horse.

GREAT OUTDOORS

or was it?

by DOROTHY M. JOHNSON

There were seven females in the party — eight if you count the pack horse, an old white mare that caused all our trouble. The others were my mother, me, Mrs. Jefferson (a tiny woman slightly handicapped by a broken arm in a sling), and four teenage girls: Grace and Ethel Van Dyke, Mrs. Jefferson's sister, Clara, and Ella Saurey. Ella, now Mrs. Ed Neitzling of Kalispell, was about fourteen when all this happened. She recently cleared up some of the trip's details that I had forgotten.

All the females in the party (except, of course, the pack mare) wore bib overalls. Ladies didn't normally wear men's clothes in those days, but long skirts were no good for climbing over down timber in the woods.

What we went for, Ella Neitzling remembers, was huckleberries. That figures. They were there, they were free, and they made good pies. And we had to have some sound reason for the expedition; in those days, people didn't like to admit that they did anything just for fun.

We went in what should have been relative comfort. We didn't have to back-pack because we had that old mare, with Mr. Jefferson in charge. She carried our bedding and all our utensils, such

as coffee pot, axe, frying pan and eating tools, and all our grub except a slab of bacon that one of the girls had in a fishing creel.

See the jaunty campers swinging along toward the mountains north of town, the Whitefish range of the Rockies. After three or four miles they are not so jaunty any more. They have reached the foothills and are plodding, not swinging. See them slap mosquitoes, ha ha. See them sweat, so that one by one they take off their sweaters and let Mr. Jefferson put them on top of the horse. This they'll regret.

Some of the jolly hikers are learning a thing or two, like when to climb over logs and when to duck under down timber. The others knew already. They are resting more often now. They are thinking that it will be nice to stop and build a fire in front of the old cabin Mr. Jefferson knows about and lay out all those blankets and have a good supper and go to bed early. Isn't it nice to have everything on the pack horse?

But where is the pack horse? For that matter, where is Mr. Jefferson? Why are the hikers suddenly excited? Are they lost? No, they are not lost; they have arrived at the cabin. But Mr. Jefferson and the horse are missing, with all the comforts of home.





Now what are they going to do? Why, yell so Mr. Jefferson will know where they are. Yell, hikers, yell. No answer. Just when did they lose Mr. Jefferson, anyway? Probably back yonder when they ducked under a fallen tree but he had to lead the horse around it. And he must have got onto a different trail and where is he now? Yell, yell, yell — calmly, of course. And who just tripped over a root and rolled down the trail? Why, that was Mrs. Jefferson being calm with her broken arm in a sling.

See the dauntless campers making the best of it in the wilderness. They may be inexperienced, but they are not stupid. They have matches and jackknives. So they build a nice fire outside the cabin and everybody scurries around collecting firewood. Lots of firewood. They scurry some more to bring back great armfuls of sweet-smelling giant ferns to make a nice thick bed in the cabin — but without any blankets. Every now and then they all yell for Mr. Jefferson.

They use their pocketknives to sharpen sticks and to slice that slab of bacon. They cook the bacon on the sticks and let the grease drip on their wet shoes. After it is dark they hear a couple of pistol shots far away and decide that this is a message from Mr. Jefferson, indicating that he is thinking of them.

MEANWHILE, in another part of the forest, see the pack horse. See Mr. Jefferson. Why is Mr. Jefferson mad? Because the place where he is spending the night does not have running water or any other kind. He has blankets and coats and plenty of grub and a six-shooter with ammunition, but he cannot have a drink of plain ordinary water. Neither can the old white mare, but never mind her. To hell with her. He speaks to her in a most unfriendly way as he opens a can of evaporated milk. It will never take the place of water. Then he hobbles the pack horse so she can't get away, and he goes to bed but he cannot sleep very well. Come daylight he will load up the horse and catch up with the rest of his party.

The horse doesn't sleep well either. She suspects a bear in the neighborhood, and she craves friendly company. Since she cannot crawl under the blankets with Mr. Jefferson, she gets as close to the campfire as possible. Sometime during the night when Mr. Jefferson is dozing, the horse becomes convinced that the bear is close by and yearning for nice fresh horse meat. So in spite of the hobbles, she heads back toward town as fast as she can go.

Mr. Jefferson awakes in a hurry. He tries to catch the horse, but she can see better in the dark than he can. Alas, poor Mr. Jefferson! His campers are in one place, he and the contents of the pack are in another place, and the old white mare is a rapidly moving object somewhere else in the forest primeval. Somehow he has to get all these things together in one place before the other members of the party starve — and he doesn't know for sure whether they ever reached the cabin he had told them about. He has a big, bad problem in logistics. And he can't begin to solve it until there's enough daylight so he can start back down the trail after that homesick horse.

Along toward noon, up at the old cabin, see the brave campers, still with their chins up, tired of bacon straight, but not happy to observe that there is practically no bacon left to be tired of. Hear Mr. Jefferson, down the trail, fire his revolver to let them know he is coming. Hear the campers yell and cheer. See Mr. Jefferson trudging up the trail leading the retrieved pack horse. See Mrs. Jefferson, being very calm, run toward him, trip over a root, and roll down the slope again with her broken arm in a sling. See everybody happy, happy, happy!

That is all I remember about the camping trip. In my memory, the story ends with the grand reunion. Ella Neitzling remembers that we went on to another cabin, below the old Micho mine, the second

night, and stayed out a third night and did get huckleberries. Now I realize that they must all have been afraid and worried, but they never let me guess. I found it all very interesting, but that was all. I don't even remember being cold during the night. I found out that bacon, which I had disliked until that time, is perfectly delicious. True, everybody scavenged around and built up a huge pile of firewood, and someone kept a big fire going outside the cabin all night, but they must have told me that was so Mr. Jefferson could find us. Nobody said a word about needing a fire to scare off bears.

At age seven, nothing awful had ever happened to me, for my parents kept bad things away. I had never been afraid of anything or anybody except my first and second grade teachers. Since that blissful, carefree time of my life I have become one of the world's great worriers, with good reason. But there was a lovely time when I was very young and able to take it for granted that every story has a happy ending.

The older girls in the party weren't so lucky. They had lived long enough to learn that bad things can happen even to the nicest people. But however close they may have been to tears or hysteria, they said nothing to suggest to a little girl that we might be in an awful fix. Ella, Clara, Grace and Ethel, I salute you.



ANOTHER CAMPING TRIP included my parents and me and Ella Saurey. We traveled by train, disembarked with our belongings where a signpost said Gary and camped very near the railroad track. This may have been another huckleberry expedition. (Some people like huckleberries better than I do). What I remember about this camp is my mother's growing horror at the housekeeping habits of a fisherman who was camped there alone. He never washed his frying pan or his plate. For breakfast he fried bacon; at noon he fried trout in the bacon grease, and again for supper. Next day he did the same thing. The idea of cooking bacon after fish gave my mother the collywobbles. Ah, well, he was a free spirit who just didn't like to wash dishes.

The big problem about camping was to get the equipment to a suitable place without having to

backpack very far. A boat was fine if you wanted to camp on the shore of Whitefish Lake. (Of course first you had to get your stuff from your house to the boat). Once with two other teen-agers I had permission to stay out as long as the grub lasted. We made it stretch by shooting two pine squirrels for meat; we had a few sad potatoes and enough saved-up bacon grease to fry the squirrels and make gravy thickened with pancake flour. A pine squirrel, skinned and dressed out, is pitifully small. If you have a cavity in a back tooth you can mislay your whole meat ration. Next morning we voted unanimously to go home, unable to face a diet of pancake flour and spring water. We had used up all the bacon grease and scared off all the squirrels.

Real camping, with no transportation, was harder. When you omit all the food you can't carry on your back because it is too bulky (bread, dry cereal, salad materials), too heavy (potatoes and all other fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, canned food, anything in glass), too fragile (eggs) or too spoilable (milk, butter, fresh meat), what have you got left? Nothing fit to eat, that's what. The more I think about it, the more I wonder why anybody bothered to answer the call of the wild. Convenience foods — dried, freeze-dried and instant — hadn't been invented. There was something that purported to be dried milk; mixed with water, it tasted awful. There were dried eggs, expensive and hard to get and also awful.

A day's menu came out about this way:

Breakfast: Bacon, pancakes fried in the grease, no syrup. Or cornmeal mush with prunes or raisins cooked in it, and that peculiar-tasting reconstituted milk.

Lunch: Cold pancakes and bacon or cold cornmeal mush. Because if you stop long enough to unpack and build a fire, you'll never get where you're planning to get, and the slower you travel the longer you'll be subsisting on this ghastly grub.

Supper: Fried trout if you're lucky, but don't count on it. Bacon, scrambled eggs, bannocks, gravy (made of bacon grease, that queer milk, and flour), very plain cake if you're ambitious. Bannocks are baking-powder biscuits fried instead of baked, and pretty good. Keep in mind that biscuit mix hadn't been invented; you measured and stirred up flour, shortening, salt, baking powder. Cake mix was still in the future, too. You made cake from scratch and baked it in a pie tin, using campfire heat reflected from a small square of tin that you carried along for that purpose.



LET'S LOOK at the period in the context of anthropological development. Man had learned to use fire; we carried matches in a Prince Albert tin. He had invented the wheel — not that it did any good on narrow mountain trails. He had even invented gunpowder and firearms. But all the things that make camping easy and comfortable now he just hadn't got around to yet. (Among the first things a small child learned were: take along some matches in case you get lost, be sure to put out your campfire thoroughly, and never point a gun at anybody even if you know it's not loaded).

I usually carried a .38 revolver in a holster on hikes or else a .22 repeating rifle, but if you're carrying a pack it's better to have your hands free. Experienced woodsmen chortled about my firearms, advising, "If you meet a bear, throw the gun at him and run."

But one time the .38 came in handy even without bears. An equally weary companion and I had arrived at a lake where we intended to camp, but the sound of splashing and cheerful male voices indicated that somebody had gotten there before us. Flashes of white through the trees indicated that the swimmers were bare. That far from civilization, they should have been safe. I ought to explain that this was about 1924, and both we back-packing girls and the swimming boys would have been greatly embarrassed at a confrontation. Streaking was fifty years in the future.

My friend and I yelled at each other, which wasn't necessary because we were only ten feet apart. The swimmers didn't hear us. So I pulled out my trusty hawg laig and fired it into the air to attract their attention and then we yelled at each other again. Our soprano yells came close to paralyzing those fellows. There was dead silence up ahead, then frenzied activity. We sat down, rested our packs against a handy log, and discussed the day's journey loudly, in tedious detail. When it seemed prudent to resume our journey, we expressed surprise and delight to find two high school boys from home camped there.

"We were swimming," one of them remarked.

"Ah, yes, your hair's wet," said one of us. "Hey, you're missing one shirt sleeve."

"Yeah," said the one-sleeve camper, blushing, "we got dressed in an awful hurry."

Other times, other customs. My .38 was never needed to throw at a bear, but it came in handy that time to permit swimmers to preserve their dignity with the loss of only one shirt sleeve.

We may call the period B.P. — Before Plastics. There were no handy little transparent plastic bags or jars to carry things in. There were no big sheets of plastic for wrapping wet bathing suits, wet dish towels or wet anything. There were no detergents. You started out with a bar of soap, and if you were lucky you didn't lose it until a couple of days before

you got home. This was not only Before Plastics; it was before nylon, transistor radios, cigarette lighters, spray cans, Scotch tape, ballpoint pens and paperback books. When you wanted to pack up after cooking a meal, utensils were too greasy, too smoke-blackened, and too hot.

The other day, comparing camping then with camping now, I took a look at the packages of freeze-dried food currently available to back packers. They include pork chops, cottage cheese, tuna salad, shrimp cocktail, beef stroganoff and chocolate cream pie. Shocking, that's what it is. It may taste good, for all I know, but that kind of gourmet coddling won't strengthen anybody's character like cold corn-meal mush. Of course, lots of people don't even want their characters strengthened.

To go camping the easy way, with a vehicle to carry the impedimenta, was sort of cheating. I cheated whenever possible. On one such trip, three of us unloaded in a pleasant natural meadow by a stream, said good-bye to the obliging truck driver, and wrestled up a pup tent that would give a mature Chihuahua screaming claustrophobia. That night we were all in it, like teaspoons, when some monstrous beast invaded our camp, snorted around and knocked some things over. We were curious, but not curious enough to crawl out and take a look. No brontosaurus or sabre-tooth tiger had been reported along the South Fork of the Flathead River, but that didn't prove there weren't any. Maybe the adventurers who had encountered them just never came home and weren't missed.

The beast came the second night, too, and this time it was even madder. Our visitor made loud huffing noises while tearing a dish towel to shreds. It raged and stamped and left footprints, from which we deduced that it was a deer complaining that we were ruining the neighborhood.

THE NIGHTS THERE were haunted but the days were enchanted. I don't remember what my companions did for amusement. I spent the time playing with butterflies. The river — icy and swirling, full of foam and rapids and sucking whirlpools — was some distance from camp. Between the white water and the black wall of the forest was a long, sweet stretch of white sand. I wore a swim suit but did not venture into that savage water. I just played in the sand and dreamed, and the butterflies found me. There were millions of them, brown and gold. They alighted on me, wing-

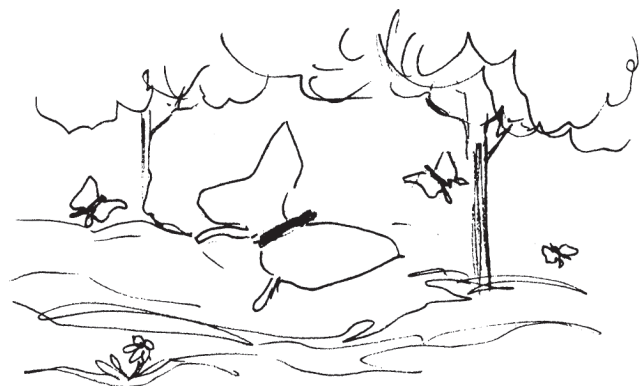
quivering, in such hordes that I thought I too might fly. They uncurled their mouths (like tiny, coiled-up hoses) and kissed me delicately and flew away and alighted again to savor this new wonder, the taste of human skin. When I moved, they fluttered, and I chased clouds of them over the white sand, and they settled on me again in silky glory when I stopped and was quiet.

That enchanted beach is lost now, doubly lost. No living being can ever again see that white sand between the river and the forest or invite the kisses of the butterflies. First a forest fire destroyed the place. Then the reservoir behind Hungry Horse Dam flooded it forever. But in my memory it remains as it was fifty years ago, untouched, unhurt by fire or flood or time, and sometimes I go spinning back to it, and the butterflies still dance forever and flutter down to kiss my skin. It is my secret, remembered place where nobody goes but me.

Some of the denizens of the wild used to become remarkably fierce under certain circumstances — if back packers got really hungry for meat, for instance. Like those two pine squirrels I mentioned earlier. Why, they growled and roared and showed their teeth until we had to unlimber our artillery. We defended ourselves with my .22 rifle, because the four-ten shotgun would have demolished them completely.

On another trip, three separate pairs of back packers we met had fresh venison, and all of them maintained that they had fired in self-defense. We agreed that a buck deer can get very mean in August, or even a doe if that's what you happen to meet. It was harder to understand when a couple of boys told of being attacked by angry grouse, but no doubt the birds were as vicious as reported.

It used to be illegal to kill porcupines, the theory being that a starving man without a gun could club one to death for food. I don't know what roast porcupine tastes like now that it's legal, but it was pretty good, like pork, the one time I ate some.





THE FIRST RULE of camping was that it would probably rain, so you ought to have a tent. A pup tent would keep some of the rain off if you had (1) strength enough to carry all that heavy canvas and (2) patience enough to hitch it up when you made camp. It was easier to be optimistic and go to bed thinking it wouldn't rain; when it did, you could pull the thing over you and lie there wishing you'd been smart enough to stay home.

Or you could take a smaller hunk of canvas, a tarpaulin (called a tarpoleon), sometimes known as a shelter half. Half of two recumbent campers was about what it would shelter, and not even that if the wind blew. Canvas was very heavy to carry. Now there are nylon tents, light as a cloud. Ah, me.

In theory, cedar boughs made a fine bed, but a solid protuberance always developed that threatened to perforate your rib cage. For cutting cedar boughs and firewood you needed an axe. If it was big enough to be efficient, it was awfully heavy. A small axe in a leather case hitched to your belt was handy but so ineffective for chopping that you might as well gnaw the wood like a beaver.

Axes haven't changed much, but they're not used so often. Nowadays some back packers take along a one-burner stove for cooking. There's one that weighs only 18 ounces when filled with two hours' worth of fuel. Anyway, firewood is harder to find than it used to be because of continuing wear and tear on campsites. Wood is still needed for an

ordinary fire to keep campers warm while they sit around telling lies, but any day now someone will patent an instant fireplace (just add water) with built-in hi fi and automatic corn popper, all reduced to the size of a deck of cards for easy carrying.

Back to the bed making. On top of the cedar boughs went the blankets. Sleeping bags hadn't been invented. There were huge safety pins to hold blankets in a sack shape after you figured out how to fold them. It's possible that some campers still use blankets, because although down sleeping bags, weighing from two and a half to five pounds, are very nice, they cost from \$90 to \$170. In fact, what it costs to get a good camping outfit together used to be enough to put a kid through a year of college.

Obviously I was never a dedicated camper or I would not now look back on those experiences with profound relief that they need not be repeated. On the other hand, without those memories I could not now so thoroughly enjoy luxury hotels. For instance, there's one in Johannesburg where each member of our tour group had a large suite instead of a mere room, plus a private bar and three telephones. I've never needed to telephone from the bathroom, but maybe that hotel gets a lot of business from international spies.

How can anyone really appreciate the elegant blue flame of blazing brandy on *crepes Suzette* who never choked down a lunch of cold bacon and pancakes? And there is caviar — I don't like it much, but I've eaten worse grub on camping trips.

HIKING (without a backpack, and home for supper) was what I really liked — enough to go by myself if there was no prospect of company. If people go hiking now around Whitefish, it's hard to figure out where they go unless they use a car to start out with. The close-by woods have disappeared; any place you might want to walk to is somebody's front lawn. It used to be that all you needed was a direction. After a couple of miles you could pretend nobody had ever been there before unless you came to a deserted cabin. Then you could make up stories about what bad-guy-on-the-run had inhabited it.

Old cabins were fascinating. They smelled of pack rats and old socks. There were empty whiskey bottles under the bunks and empty corn-cure bottles all over the floor. I still wonder why the men who lived in them temporarily were all subject to sore feet. Maybe because they never washed their socks.

A hike that was a real workout was to Beaver Lake, the other side of Lion Mountain, west of town. There were two ways to get there, but it was about five miles either way. One approach involved balancing on the sides of your feet while picking your way across a long stretch of shale on the far side of the mountain. There was no trail at that spot because the shale kept sliding down the slope, and hikers had to be nimble or they'd go with it.

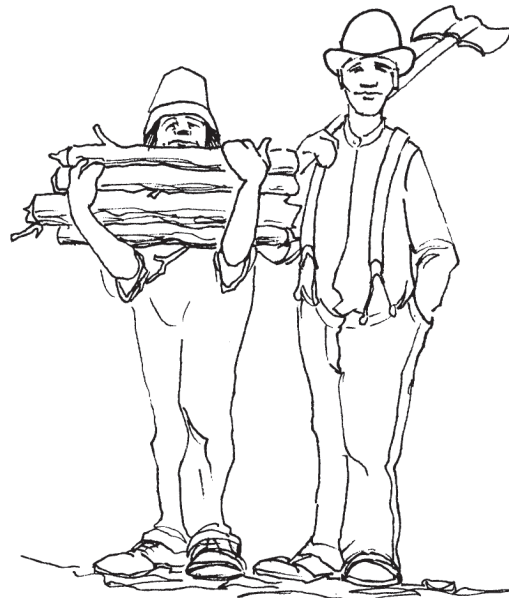
Once Ruth Dugan and I took swimming suits to Beaver Lake and, after making sure the cabin there was not inhabited, went swimming. There was no beach. It was mucky quicksand with waterlilies. So we dived from the shaky little wooden dock and then skinned out of our suits and hung them on handy nails. We were splashing around happily in the utter freedom of skinny dipping when we heard wild laughter from across the lake.

So we hastened to get back into our suits and become once more the modest mermaids our mothers thought we were. Picture it for yourself: two desperate damsels trying to put on wet swimming suits *under water* with nothing to stand on and no way to hang on to the dock for support because we needed both hands to manage the suits. We were competent swimmers, but here were problems we had never encountered before. Treading water was not easy while we tried to thrust our feet through the places where the feet had to go. We struggled and gulped and went under several times, becoming tangled in dangling waterlily roots. When we surfaced, gasping, that wild laughter was closer, but we couldn't see any boat. All we could see was a swimming bird

that looked something like a duck. It was only then that we realized loons really do laugh. We were so shaken that we got dressed at once and headed for home, by wagon road and railroad track.

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL Commencement of Whitefish High School, it says here on the old program I have before me, took place May 18, 1922, with thirteen sweet girl graduates and one lonely boy lined up in glory on the platform at the Masonic Temple. Now it can be told that five of those girls had been lost in the woods the day before, and it was my fault. Or shall we say it was the fault of the four who chose me as guide and trail blazer on the senior hike? I wasn't as smart as we all thought I was. I chose to take us into the foothills north of town, where I didn't know my way around at all. We plunged doggedly up hill and down, with me telling one fast fib after another about where we were and where we were going, not admitting that we were totally lost. I was mightily relieved when we finally came to a vantage point from which we could see which way Whitefish was.

We did get back all right, but Ruth Diver had such a fearful sunburn that she was utterly miserable while we sat there in the Masonic Temple all decked out in our pastel organdy dresses, and pretending to listen to whatever good advice the commencement speaker gave us. Ruth's dress was pale blue, a spectacular contrast with her sunburn.



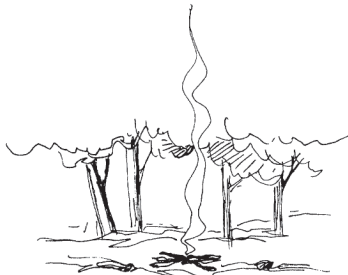
Swimming in Whitefish Lake was a big thing — and still is, on a larger scale because it is now a recreation center that draws people from many states. The last I heard, lake property (if available) was priced at \$320 a shore foot and going up. It was nicer when it didn't seem to belong to anybody.

There was always a problem of where to dress at the city beach. Sometimes there were dressing shacks (and the City Council was criticized for wasting the taxpayers' money) and sometimes there weren't so we hid in the bushes. Bad boys poked holes in the walls of the girls' shack for peeking purposes, but smart girls indignantly plugged them or hung clothes over them. A few times I dressed at the home of some people on Lakeside Hill, but their neighbors complained on seeing me walk by in my bathing suit. No doubt a twelve-year-old girl child in a swim suit that came down almost to her knees was just too sexy.

There was never a life guard at the city beach but there were no drownings. There were no little kids floating on inner tubes, either. We simply learned to swim, each after his own fashion, and wherever we swam out to we jolly well had to swim back from. Once three of us swam across a bay by easy stages, with considerable floating and backstroking, ate some nice green apples we found growing there, and swam back. On mature reflection, I don't think this was a good idea.

YEARS LATER, swimming in Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin, I found out that kids in that area had teachers and as a result all swam the same way. Some years after that, living in New York City and on a vacation at a summer camp for young businesswomen in New Jersey, I ran into a bunch of rules that made me downright mad. City girls liked to have their recreation planned — play volley ball for an hour, do something else for half an hour, swim at a specified time, with every minute supervised. And everybody had to swim the same stroke! We swam that stroke or else stayed in shallow water inside a slimy wooden enclosure.

My swimming is what you might call free style. It gets me there and brings me back, and I never aspired to Olympic competition. No self-reliant daughter of the untrammelled West could put up with such regimentation as that place imposed. I was there for a vacation, not to serve a sentence in a minimum-security prison camp. So on the third day of what was supposed to be two weeks of wholesome outdoor living I told the lady warden I had to get back to the city to consult my doctor. She didn't quite believe that, but she couldn't prove it wasn't true. I spent the rest of the two weeks in New York, sweaty but free. I'll bet that bossy swimming instructor never swam a bay in Whitefish Lake after eating green apples. Probably she never roasted bacon on a stick, either, or had a butterfly come fluttering by to kiss her on the cheek.



UNDER DISCUSSION: A TANTALIZING LIST OF SEQUELS

Sandy Howard, producer of the film, *A Man Called Horse*, which was based on a story by Dorothy Johnson, is planning a sequel, he recently told her. Like the very popular *Horse*, the sequel will star Richard Harris. In the first film, Harris was an English nobleman captured by the Sioux Indians and, in a bloody ritual of endurance, became a warrior member of the tribe. In the sequel he will return to the Sioux because they need his help.

"That's all I've heard about it so far," Miss Johnson told us. "I won't be doing any of the writing. I don't know anything about writing screenplays. But in my dizzier moments I keep dreaming up titles for a whole series of sequels. This one could be *The Return of a Man Called Horse*, to be followed by *Horse's Second Wife* and *The Son of a Man Called Horse*. Let's call him Pony Boy. He might go to England in *Lord Pony Boy*. Then *Pony Boy at Oxford* and *Pony Boy at the Court of Queen Victoria*, followed by *Pony Boy Discovers America*, *Pony Boy Defeats the U.S. Cavalry* and *Pony Boy Runs for President*, ending with *Pony Boy Abolishes the Bureau of Indian Affairs*.

"You will never see these great titles on the marquee of your local movie theater, but if Sandy Howard does make a sequel it should be a fine picture."

Then, as far as we're concerned, Miss Johnson held out promise of the best sequel of all:

"Meanwhile, I'm writing some more reminiscences about growing up in Whitefish, Montana, for publication in this magazine."