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SQUADRON "A" SEES RANCH COUNTRY
Grave Hardships Experienced Through Shortage of Tobacco

BY CORRESPONDENT SQUADRON "A"

With the dawn of a perfect Texas morning coming up like thunder over the picket line, Squadron A Cavalry pulled out of camp for their first five day hike to the ranch country. We were laden, so to speak, to the gunwales, the violent protests of the horses to the contrary notwithstanding; our saddlebags replete with what little comforts of home could be smuggled within the weight limit and our canteen overflowing with the clear and sparkling water for which McAllen is so justly famous.

We struck across country for Sharyland and thence to Mission where we anticipated a long halt and a full meal at the largest hotel (provided of course by the government) but we marched through Mission same as if there had been no town there at all and it was only after we had left it far in the distance that we halted to water the horses. Some of the men believed themselves more in need of watering and one recruit went so far as to say he thought the men were more important than the horses anyway!

Now, for the doughboy, work stops when his march is over and his camp is pitched. For the cavalry it just begins. There is a picket line to be put up, wagons of hay to be unloaded and sprinkled among horses who try to kick and bite their benefactors, and all the duties prescribed by the slogan "horses first—the men can wait." So there were no beans until nine o'clock after which we crawled into our pup tents and, to all intents and purposes, died.

The next morning was devoted to a military problem. The camp was divided into two sections; Troops C and D got up at four, being careful not to wake the others and were out of camp by six, trotting through the jungle along a blazed trail, in and out among cactus ten feet tall, and remarkably thorny, and mesquite, and the skeletons of cows who had died of thirst and been picked clean by birds. The desert we traveled through is quite unlike the McAllen country; the growth is much higher and thicker and more difficult to travel through. Troops C and D rode for five miles and stopped at another ranch where they immediately prepared for the attack of the other three troops. Two men climbed the windmill to act as observers and spent their spare time turning the mill so that the men below could drink.

The machine Gun Troop was the first to arrive and was successfully routed. Troop A met the same fate. Troop B was observed to be lost in the jungle. The men on the windmill could see their guidon wandering about among the brush, but Troop B could not see the windmill, and consequently did not appear until late in the afternoon. After their defeat the entire enemy was welcomed in camp and we were all given an afternoon to ourselves during which there was a general discussion of the maneuver and a talk on the work of the hike by Major General O'Ryan.

We got up at four the next morning and rode to McAllen's ranch where we stopped for mid-day mess and an hour's rest. The country we rode through was much more pleasant than any we had seen. The road was fringed with grass, there was less of the cactus, and more, and higher mesquite. We rode along a road of soft, red sand—more like a road in New Jersey, than the usual Texas hard pan, and the whole aspect of the land was greener and brighter and less thirst provoking. We ran through two storms which were very gratifying for they cooled the air, and the wet dried off immediately when the sun came out again.

Food was served in painfully small quantities and late that afternoon the effects of the lack began to show on the tempers of the men. The horses had had even less than the man, because of the difficulties of transporting oats over the bad roads and they were displaying their emotions in various ways. Sarcastic remarks passed down the lines between the troopers and the horses were cursed in six languages.

Young's ranch was our destination and when we arrived the men immediately downed their sorrows in a large concrete swimming pool which was thrown open to us. This was the first recreation—not to mention bath—we had had on the trip and was probably the best thing that has happened to us since we left New York.

Shelter tents were pitched for the night and outposts placed, whereupon there came down a genuine Texas flood. It was as if a whole sky full of water had suddenly turned inside out, and with it came a wind that made short work of all the shelter tents, and the curses, screams and groans drowned the thunder and cannot be given space in The Rattler because the self-respecting compositor would not set them up.

A drenched, stiff and sleepy bunch of men greeted the dawn and pulled out of camp without stopping to revisit the pool. But the Texas sun will dry anything and the men soon forgot everything except the pool and the yellow daisies, and the cool shade of Young's ranch. It is quite the finest place in Texas and the Squadron vote is that if one must live in this state, Young's ranch is the place to stay, rain or shine. In the next days ride, the only event

was a lonely Mexican who stood by the wayside with thousands of boxes of crackers—fig newtons, Zu Zu's and every sort of comfort for the yawning inner man. He sold them at respectable prices and is now living in a white marble palace on the palm boulevard of Mexico City with fourteen footmen at his beck and call.

By this time cigarettes and "the makins" were reduced to almost nothing, and it was only over a man's dead body that you could borrow tobacco in any form. To ask for a cigarette was an insult for which duels were fought. The falls centred round cold-drinks and rich food and everyone tried to recall the most tremendous meal he had ever eaten, and describe it to his suffering fellows. And at the end of the day came beans, and this time plenty of them, and everybody was happy and forgot beefstake dreams and went to bed under the stars with full stomachs and contented souls. The blue vault of heaven was our only covering that night for the tents were in the trucks and the truck was up to its ears in mud out among the waters of the cactus and coyote in the lonely desert of the borderland.

In the morning we were loth to leave the beautiful pasture in which we had slept, and return to the hum-drum of McAllen camp, but the thought of cigarettes and a canteen lured us up during the twenty mile ride that brought us home in time for our mid-day mess.

Now hikes have their hardships and hardship and cold canned beans, but no one in the squadron who went on that hike will ever regret the experience. A hike at least savors of soldiering and is more to the taste of the average trooper than digging drainage ditches and screening mess-shacks. So here's hoping for more of them.

AMUSEM THEATRE OPENS

Those of us who feared that in coming 2117 miles from New York we had lost the "movies" were pleasantly reassured when the canvas covered "Amusem Theatre" opened up outside the camp lines in McAllen recently. The 7th Regiment discovered them first and cheered a Pathe Weekly of the big preparedness parade which showed the 7th Regiment band passing the Washington Arch and the Platoron building.

The hurricane of two weeks ago put the canvas top temporarily out of business, but T. R. Logan & Co., the management of the "Amusem" Theatre, has come back in fine style. Beginning today, Mr. Logan will show a combination Universal and Triangle program, including a Bluebird and Red-Feather feature and two weeklies.

The admission price has been fixed at 10 cents, and there will be a star program every day. A full announcement of each day's program will appear in these columns next week and regularly thereafter.

MISSION CLEANS HOUSE

After seeing the 2nd, 14th and 69th Infantry regiments "police" their camps for many painful days in succession, the city of Mission decided it was its turn to clean house. Three days were dedicated to the purpose, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of last week.

The military police of Mission assisted in the vigilance work, which was executed by the Mission Civic League and the members of the Mission Chamber of Commerce, Secretary Burnett presiding. General Lester, 1st Brigade, lent some wagons and Captain Rodden, Chief Sanitary Inspector of the Brigade, made a military inspection of stores and the business section.

Considerable brush and rubbish was removed. While the benefits of this particular "clean-up campaign" will be felt more particularly by the residents of Mission themselves, it is expected that Mission will be a more delightful place for the troops than before.

REGIMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

The Rio Grande Rattler asks the co-operation and help of every unit of the Division in obtaining the news of each individual organization.

Space limits compel us to allow each regiment about one-half column or approximately five hundred words.

Lieut. C. R. Baines, news editor, requests that the authorized regimental correspondent procure the news items from the various company correspondents, whip it into shape and forward as soon as possible.

The Rattler asks every organization to co-operate by appointing their correspondent at once.

Copy should reach Division Headquarters not later than the Thursday night preceding date of publication.

NO FLIES ON ENGINEERS

There is no need in the camp of the Twenty-second Engineers to raise the traditional cry of the corps, "Heads Up!" so far as flies are concerned. Flies are as scarce as tarantulas in the camp, and tarantulas are scarcer there than any place else on the division reservation. When the second battalion settled on the site west of the Hidalgo road it had its full share of flies. It would have them yet, perhaps, if Captain George H. Johnson, of H. Company, hadn't sent his mess sergeant into town for some disinfectant.

The sergeant came back with a compound of carbolic acid (name to appear in these columns when the makers' advertisement does, this being a newspaper that rises above all business office considerations) designed for use as a stable and corral dip. He brought as well, a big tin atomizer and sprayed the clustered thousands along the ridge pole of the company kitchen. He sprayed the other thousands about the incinerator and the sink, and the fly then there ceased to be a problem with H. Company.

Through the rest of the battalion the word spread, and by the time the First Battalion moved in on August 6, there weren't flies enough to supply a museum, and there are fewer still now. When the spraying began one company of the engineers had fourteen men on the sick list. Two weeks later in the entire battalion there was but one, a private in quarters because of the kick of a mule.

Get Your **Fatigue Uniform**
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Everything in the clothes line for "off duty." Pants that "fit." Clothes that wear like your old O D's but as cool as cotton khaki. Bandannas, cool underwear, etc.

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