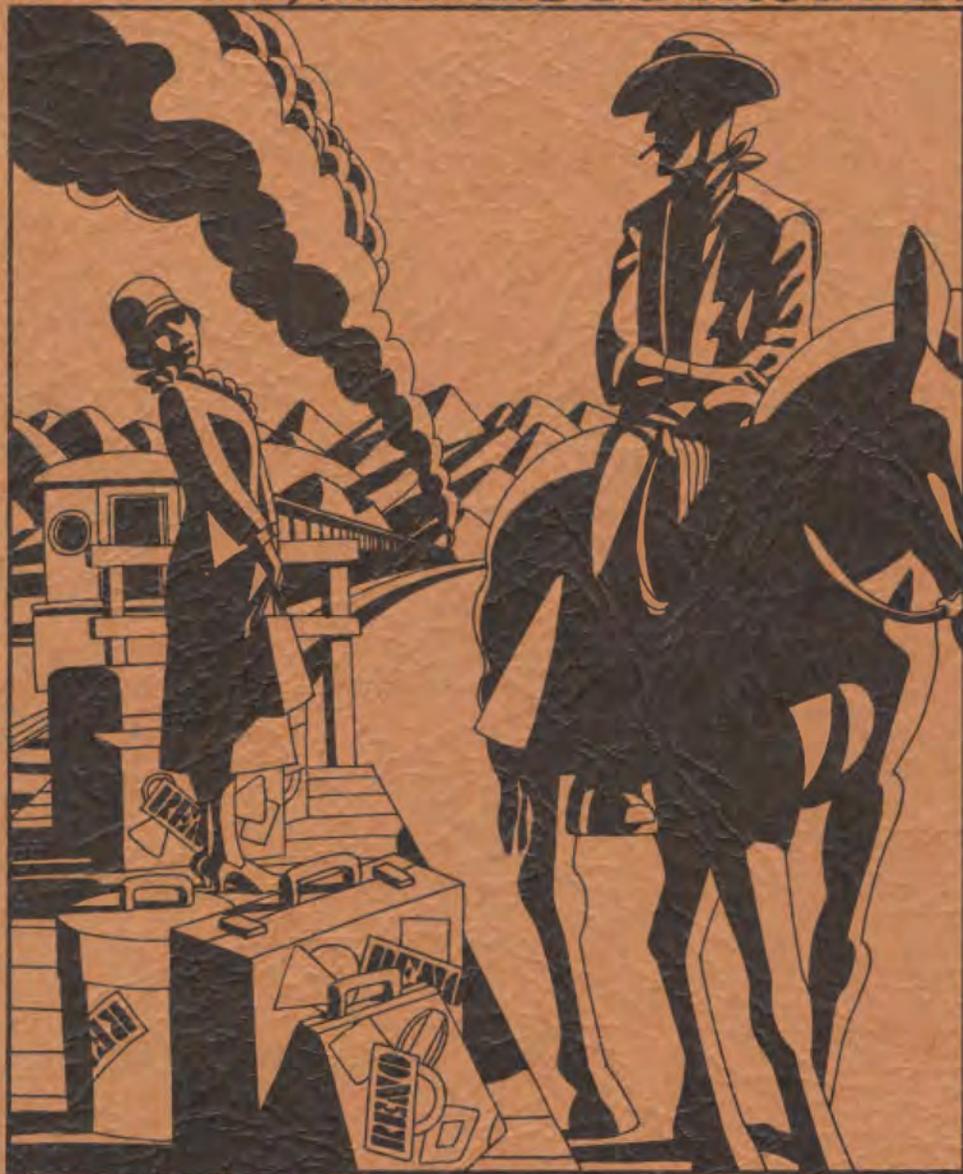


NONE OF THE COMFORTS OF HOME
BUT OH, THOSE COWBOYS!



THE SAGA OF THE NEVADA DUDE RANCHES

by **BASIL WOON**

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The Saga of the Nevada Dude Ranches

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Illustrations and Cover by b. kliban

Federated Features, Inc.
Reno, Nevada

Publishers' Note

This little book was originally written by Basil Woon as a magazine article but proved to be too long for the purposes of the magazine for which it was intended. Mr. Woon felt that the research that had gone into the writing of what is really a slice of Nevada's recent history did not justify the drastic cutting which the magazine editor wanted, and so his story is now printed without photographs, in order that copyright may be obtained. It is not intended to be placed on public sale, but persons interested in acquiring numbered and signed copies, may do so by applying to the publishers, Federated Features, Inc., P. O. Box 1688, Reno, Nevada 89505, enclosing Five Dollars per copy to cover expenses of printing, wrapping and mailing. Only 300 copies (numbered) will be printed of this first edition and no other editions are at present planned.

Federated Features, Inc.

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—Basil Woon

THE WRANGLER'S LAMENT

*Oh, I've wrangled through the mountains and the desert solitudes,
But I never did know nuthin' 'til I started wranglin' dudes!
I was broke and needin' money so I hired me out one day
In the middle of the summer, puttin' up alfalfa hay—
I cut it an' I shocked it an' I hauled it to the stack,
But right there I balked an' snorted an' asked them for my jack.*

*Then I hired out next mornin' toppin' broncs and bustin' mules—
There was plenty of excitement but it ain't like handlin' tools.
I had the bunch all gentled an' was settin' pretty neat
When th' Boss came down th' river with a bunch o' tenderfeet.
There were fourteen men and women, short, tall, thin an' fat,
An' they damn near druv me crazy askin' "What is this," an'
"What is that."*

*One ol' filly, fat an' fifty, nearly laid us out next day
When she asked the boss a question, "Do the cowboys, too, eat
hay?"*

*Well, we mounted up an' started for a lake up in the hills
An' before our destination I'd sure handed them some thrills!
Two got lost right after supper, so I had to hunt 'em up
An' offer them th' bottle—but they had to have it in a cup.*

*They would see a squirrel or a rabbit and go chasin' after it
An' then was shocked to her my langwidge as my pack-string hit
the grit.*

*Ten days I spent a-herdin' them green gals and greener men
An' I shore lost my religion 'fore we hit th' ranch again.*

*I'm a tough, hard-boiled old cow-hand with a weatherbeaten hide,
But herdin' cows is nuthin' to teachin' dudes to ride.
I can stand their hitoned langwidge an' their hifalutin' foods—
But you bet your bottom dollar I'm fed up on wranglin' dudes!*

—Written at the Monte Cristo Ranch, a "real Western Cow Ranch", by an unknown poet.
(Courtesy of Mrs. C. J. Thornton of Reno.)

THE SAGA of the NEVADA DUDE RANCHES



In the year 1931, or it may have been '32 or '33 or '34 or even later, Jane Something-Somebody felt she just had to get a divorce, all her friends were doing it, anyway her husband was unfaithful, or she was. Jane lived in New York, or Boston, or maybe on Philadelphia's Main Line; she had a home and a "place" in the country; she was 27 or 37 or thereabouts; she had never cooked a meal in her life or made a bed or washed anything but herself; since she was a small girl, money had been something she or her husband or her Dad signed a check for and she had never lacked for anything in the world except perhaps a perpetual *je ne sais quoi* which disturbed her dreams and that she knew money couldn't buy.

Jane had been a deb at the Ritz (or the Bellevue-Stratford); she had been to Bermuda, to Paris (of course!), to Rome, to Greece, to London; she had golfed in the Highlands and dared the Cresta Run of St. Moritz; but she had never been west of the Alleghenies and her only contact with the Wild West had been at Smith (or Vassar or Wellesley or Bryn Mawr) where she had a girl friend from San Francisco who strangely was neither Indian nor Chinese.

Our girl had charge accounts at the Ritz and the Plaza and the better restaurants and stores and drew a warm welcome at Tiffany's or Cartier's or Black, Starr & Frost; she had been sheltered and paid for all her life and was, to cut it short, a beautiful but spoiled baby.

One day Jane whispered to a friend that she thought she'd like a divorce and her friend replied, "My dear, there's absolutely only *one* place to go—Reno. It's at the other end of the world, of course, but wait until you see those cowboys!"

Around midnight a few weeks later, while Reno's Commercial Row was roaring, the bars lined by picturesque gentlemen in cowboots and bent sombreros, the Overland Limited deposited Jane at a small yellow station labelled RENO, where two persons awaited her arrival. One was distinguished by the fact that he wore a tie, so you were pretty sure he was a lawyer or a gambler. The other was Slats. Slats had no stomach, wore a huge hat, fancy carved boots, sheepskin coat and jeans. He was Jane's very first wrangler; he was very polite, called her Ma'am and was so absolutely outside her experience that, a few weeks later, she almost married him. Slats fastened her five suitcases (she had been warned to bring only necessities) in the rumble seat of the Model A, saying that he would fetch the trunks tomorrow. The lawyer said that perhaps Jane would like a drink but, after a nervous look at the reeling customers outside the Palace Club, she thought she'd better not.

Sitting besides Slats in the Model A Jane saw the lights of Reno disappear in a few minutes. Thereafter for 35 miles or so there were no more lights, not even of other cars, except their own dim highlights, only the misty shapes of naked mountains and occasionally of a steer as it lumbered along the narrow washboard highway, turning to regard them placidly as Slats braked and honked. Finally the car turned on a side road, the sagebrush scraping its sides as it turned and twisted upward toward a star-studded sky. Twice Slats stopped to unpadlock and open a gate, which he carefully closed afterward. The jolting woke Jane up and at last there were lights ahead. Slats honked, the car came

to rest and a door opened. A hearty female voice shouted, "Hi! Welcome to the X Bar Y!"*

The voice belonged to a comely, motherly young woman who wielded a steaming pot of coffee. "You like yours straight?" she asked, waving a bottle in the other hand. "Slats likes a slug in his." She poured two fingers of bourbon in Slats' mug. "Number Four," she said, and Slats began to unload the suitcases. Then, to Jane, "Sit down and rest. Slats 'll take your bags over. We're kind of rough and ready here. But," she smiled, "the boys 'll see you have a good time. Do you ride?" Jane said she did and that she had brought her habit (it had been made for her by O'Rossen of the Place Vendôme and she had cut a figure in it along the allées of the Bois). Back home she had a hunter; in Virginia she rode to hounds. Her English saddle was handmade to measure in Jermyn street. She was never once to use the saddle nor the costume in Nevada.

Number Four was some distance across the yard, a 12x8 cabin with an iron bed, an armchair made of rawhide, a small writing desk and table and, behind a screen, a washbasin with a jug of water on the floor beside. The floor was carpeted with a colorful rattan rug. There were two small windows, out of one of which Jane stared apprehensively into the mysterious night. Slats appeared with a jug of hot water. "Bathroom's in the house," he told her, "but this 'll do you for now. Someone 'll bring you another jug in the mornin'. Breakfast's at seven or when you git up." He pointed casually into the darkness, now beginning to be illuminated by a tardy but brilliant moon. "Toilet's in that li'l shack over there—you follow this path. There's a lamp lit inside." He took a quick look around, the dis-

*The writer invented this brand.
If some rancher owns it, my apologies!
—B. W.

cerning host. "Guess you're O. K.," he said. "Sweet dreams!" He opened the door to a prolonged wail sounding from a nearby canyon. Jane, startled: "What in the world . . .?" Slat, laughing: "Kyote. Sounds kinda lonesome, don't he?" He went out, the door shut and Jane returned nervously to the windows.

Dogs barked, coyotes yelped, a stallion in a pasture whinnied. The X Bar Y was now bathed in the purest moonlight Jane had ever seen. There was a subtle smell of sage permeating the cabin. Into a patch of moonlight leaped effortlessly a buck deer, nostrils twitching; another graceful leap and he was gone into the shadows. Jane came from the window and collapsed on the bed, looking at the suitcases that for the first time in her life she would have to unpack. She wondered where her maid had put things.

Two weeks later, in jeans and astride a ranch saddle, tanned, healthy and with at least two cowboys mad about her, Jane was learning to rope a calf.

II



The revolution that started the rugged and pioneer State of Nevada on its road to prosperity (or perdition, according to where you lived, east or west) began in earnest in 1931 when "Judgie" Bartlett's six-week divorce law went into effect. In the same year, needing revenue unobtainable elsewhere in a depression period, Nevada's legislators enacted another law the consequences of which have been even mightier: it legalized gambling. (There had been gambling in Nevada since before Territorial days but until 1932 it paid no taxes. Tex Rickard ran the Palace Club "wide open" in 1910.)

The two laws combined to shed a fulgent fame (or notoriety, depending on the newspaper) on Nevada that hadn't been known since the Goldfield, Tonopah and Comstock booms or the first "Battle of the Century" in 1910 between Champion Jack Johnson and "White Hope" Jim Jeffries. Graduates of the nation's law schools began opening offices in Reno while incredulous gentlemen operating concealed roulette wheels or floating crap games in eastern cities considered moving operations to a state where there was no police payoff and where—"Get this, Jake!"—they would be considered honest citizens and might even run for office.

The events of 1931 and 1932 were destined to eclipse in lasting results every bonanza that had happened before. In 1966 the gambling was to bring twenty million visitors to a state that now possessed modern schools, a fine university, magnificent freeways, tall skyscrapers and at least three churches for every gambling house. The divorce law, and the attendant quickie marriage statute, had, like the legalization of gambling, unforeseen results: many of the divorcees liked Nevada so much they remained to marry cowboys, spend their settlements in the state, and to start dynasties which today have considerable influence in the state's financial and political scheme, not to mention her culture.

Nevada's first divorce law, passed in 1922, when many people were regretting their World War I marriages, provided for a six months' residence and attracted little notice except from California, where the requirements were one year. In 1929 perspicacious attorneys influenced the legislature to reduce the time limit to three months.

This statute was hardly dry on the lawbooks when the Rev. Brewster Adams, returning to Nevada from a visit to the Eaton Dude Ranch in Wyoming, told Neill West, a cattleman who had operated the T-H Ranch above Pyramid Lake since 1926, that what Nevada needed was a dude ranch. Neill acted on the suggestion, built a row of cabins, and the T-H became the first dude ranch in the state. The first dude was Ethel Andrews Murphy, now the wife of Supreme Court Justice Harlan.

The T-H was formerly the Hardscrabble Ranch and was homesteaded originally by John Wesley Whitehead in 1864, before the Paiute Indian Reservation was created. Neill West had bought the Red Rock Ranch and the brand T-H from Tom Hill and continued buying land and water rights until he pushed eastward to Pyramid Lake and bought the Hardscrabble, changing the name to T-H.

Neill West started taking dudes in 1927, but only a few at first were in Nevada for divorces. Among the guests of those days were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jones (he was president of the Richfield Oil Company), J. Darrell Chase and wife (he was president of Associated Oil Company), Edgar D. Turner, president of Sherman, Clay & Co. in San Francisco, and his wife; Mr. and Mrs. Drew Pearson; Henry Morgenthau Senior, former Ambassador to Turkey, and Mrs. Morgenthau; Frances Starr, the actress, who was then Mrs. Coffin; and Roger Sessions, the composer. Only the last two sought divorces. After the six-week law went into effect in 1932, however, nearly all the guests were there for divorce. Shortly after this Neill married Augusta l'Hommedieu and she managed the dude part of the ranch until 1942, when the war and rationing made it too difficult to carry on. Neill West died in 1950 and in 1952 his widow sold the ranch to the Matley brothers of Reno, who recently sold it to Al Peigh. Mrs. West later became Mrs. Augusta l'Hommedieu Hines, having married a celebrated explorer and Alaskan pioneer, now deceased. She died recently at La Jolla, California.

There are many stories about the T-H and Neill West. When the movie called *The Iron Horse* was made near Pyramid Lake, Neill furnished all the western equipment, horses, riders, Indians and stagecoaches and was a technical advisor to John Ford, the director. He also furnished horses used in the picture *Rose Marie*, made at Cascade Lake. He had a great reputation for his horses and had a fine Arabian stallion which he bred to thoroughbreds and Appaloosas. He was a deputy sheriff of Washoe County for thirty years and in 1923 managed the Nevada division of a re-run of the Pony Express, for Wells Fargo, winning a gold medal for making a record run. The run was made by his son, Chaska West.

Probably the most tantalizing story about the T-H was given this writer by Mrs. Hines, who vouched for its veracity:

"When the P. F. Flanigan Land & Livestock Company went bankrupt (due to Pat Flanigan trying to corner the sheep market in Boston) the holdings of the company extended over about forty square miles and included six or eight fine ranches, one of which was the original T-H and another the Hardscrabble.

"The ranches were put in the hands of the bank and the bank installed French Louis on the Hardscrabble Ranch as caretaker. He lived there all by himself, his only neighbors being old Jim Sutcliffe and his daughter Nellie and her husband Charlie Cooper, who was section foreman of the Southern Pacific branch line that ran along the lake. The Sutcliffe place was two or three miles from the Hardscrabble, on the lake front. (It later became the Pyramid Lake Ranch, of which more later.)

"World War I was on and Louis didn't like what he read in the papers; Uncle Sam seemed in a bad way, so Frenchie went down to Reno and bought a lot of Liberty bonds. He also withdrew \$10,000 in gold, took the gold and the bonds back to Hardscrabble and put them in a cache he had there, in which he also kept some French railway bonds and a picture of his sister.

"It is probable that the hiding place was not far from the ranch-house because sometimes when the Coopers were calling Frenchie would say, 'I must show you my sister' and he would be gone only a few minutes before returning with the picture.

"The day after he had been to Reno and put the gold in the cache he had a message from a passing buckaroo that there was a registered letter for him at the Pyramid Post Office, which was run by Letty Whitty 12 miles up the lake. He took his Ford, received the envelope (which enclosed more French bonds) and then returned to his car to go home.

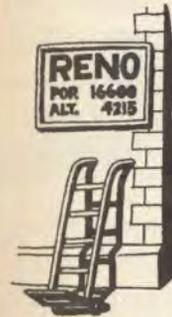
"It was a cold, stormy day and he had trouble starting his car, a Model T. He cranked and cranked until he dripped perspiration but finally got it started and drove home, with the result that he caught a terrible cold and died within the week of pneumonia.

"No one since has discovered where Frenchie hid his gold and it is probably still there . . ."

Unless someone found it and said nothing. All the owners of the ranch—the Wests, the Matleys, the Peighs—since Frenchie died say it was never found, and some disbelieve the story.

Al Peigh bought the T-H a few years ago after the main buildings had been destroyed by fire. There were the remains of an old Indian fort on a bluff above the ranch and here, with a magnificent view of Pyramid Lake far below, Mr. and Mrs. Peigh built their modern luxury home.

III



When in 1931, thanks to the aforementioned and jovial "Judgie" Bartlett, one of Nevada's more famous District Court judges, the divorce "sentence" was reduced to six weeks, the rush was on in earnest. Legal gambling added to the fascination of a state until then known mainly for its mining, sheep and cattle. Small ranches on sagebrush tracks miles from civilization, electricity or a telephone, but with one or two spare bedrooms and at least one cowboy, advertised that "a real western cow-ranch" would consider taking "guests who wish to spend a short time in beautiful Nevada." The dudes flocked in and the more primitive the ranch was the more, apparently, the dudes loved it; but not, of course, for very long.

In the year 1932, which saw F.D.R. nominated for President at Chicago, the inauguration of the "New Deal" and—almost—the end of Prohibition, Reno was the most talked about city—in certain social circles—in the United States, and the fame of the "Biggest Little City in the World" spread as far afield as London, Paris and Rome. The combination of cowboys and open gambling was a heady mixture and by the time the year ended, if a lady hadn't had at least one Reno divorce, cafe society barely noticed her.

No society section of a metropolitan daily was complete on any given Sunday without a portrait of the latest Reno divorcée,

sometimes with cowboy or wrangler attached. (Things have changed now: what divorcée wants her picture taken with a tractor?) In 1941, when patriotic males began appearing with bars on their shoulders or chevrons on their sleeves, one heart-robbing beauty was noted at the bar of "21" in New York with three chevrons on *her* sleeves. Asked what branch of the service she was in she replied, "Oh, those are my Reno divorces." By this time, so I'm told, certain fashionable Reno dude ranches were offering reductions for renewals and at least one eastern millionaire wrote to the owner of a ranch saying that he thought he was entitled to a commission: five of his wives had already been "graduated" in Nevada and he was considering sending a sixth.

By that time of course the "real old western cow-ranches" had begun to disappear and those which did not found it necessary to install bathrooms and inside plumbing. Luxury ranches like the Washoe Pines, the Flying ME and the Donner Trail, built for the trade, had begun to appear; these frankly "ranch" dudes instead of cows and the cowboys were replaced by wranglers to look after the saddle stock. More often than not the wranglers were cowboys who had heard that some of the divorcées were not only young and pretty but had millions to spend on any attractive he-man they caught on the rebound. Few such marriages lasted, but one or two did and a strange breed grew up in Nevada, boys and girls who had the advantages of eastern finishing schools combined with a knowledge of horses, cattle, mountains and the free life of the range.

IV



Dude ranches first were heard of in Wyoming and Montana, where they catered to families, fishermen, people who loved outdoor life, and honeymooners.

Dudes would arrive in June to spend the entire summer, learning to ride western-style, help in ranch chores, speak cowboy slang and eat huge steaks sliced from a fresh-killed calf, smothered in eggs.

Except at one or two ranches the dudes catered to in Nevada were there for one purpose only: divorce. The exceptions were the T-H, Pyramid Lake Ranch, the Olds, Big Canyon Ranch, Quail Canyon Ranch and the Monte Cristo, though this last had only a few guests who were not "six-weekers".

Only one hotel in Reno then could be called distinguished—the Riverside, which had been built originally by a man named Lake before Reno existed and which through several fires and rebuildings had become one of a few select inns around the world—the Menger of San Antonio and the Raffles of Singapore were of the same category—to attract an international clientele. Until the divorce trade began, the Riverside catered to mining and cattle moguls and to a few wealthy easterners who loved Nevada for her own sake. After 1931 the hotel found a new clientele among wealthy women too old or too sedentary of habit to care for the life on a ranch. Terms were given for the

six-week period; the would-be divorcées had the pleasures of gambling to while away their "sentence"; the courthouse was next door; their lawyer's office was down the street and the Truckee River flowed handily nearby for them to throw their wedding rings into. Some of the urchins daily "mining" the river for gold rings complained that occasionally a divorcée cheated—she bought a "phony ring" at Woolworth's and threw that into the river, keeping the real one to be used, perhaps, again.

All of the dude ranches seem to have clustered around Reno, though there was one at Minden which became famous when Mary Pickford stayed there for her divorce from a man named Moore, a legal separation needed in order for Mary to wed Douglas Fairbanks Senior. There were no dude ranches, so far as I have been able to discover, in Winnemucca, Tonopah, Ely or Elko, though all of these were county towns, and certainly none at Las Vegas, which at the time was hardly more than a watertank on the Salt Lake line. Tempus fugits fast in Nevada.

V



For the six-weekers who couldn't afford the dude ranches there were one or two boarding houses, often with two or three girls sharing a room. But for those who could—or whose husband could—afford them, the dude ranches were the thing. They were half the fun of getting a divorce.

In the beginning they were crude indeed. Few boasted indoor plumbing (in 1932 there were only half-a-dozen plumbers in northern Nevada and it would have cost a ranch about \$100 to fetch one for a day's work). In some the bathing place was a shack with slat flooring and an old coal-oil can suspended from the roof which had small holes punched in the bottom with an ice-pick and was fed by a cold to icy mountain stream, though the water warmed up somewhat when the sun hit the pipes in summer.

Out in the back yard were the Chic Sales, shared by guests and cowboys alike, and in case you don't know what a Chic Sale was, it was commonly known as "the backhouse" in western America until a comedian named Chic Sale wrote a handy guide on how to build one, called *The Specialist*, a rare book now. Bedrooms for the most part lacked the most ordinary luxuries taken for granted by the spoiled public of today.

In 1953 Harry Drackert, who with his wife Joan ~~were~~ then running with great success the Pyramid Lake Ranch at Sutcliffe

(as will be seen later they now have the prestigious Donner Trail) took me on a tour of northern Washoe County, I having mentioned that I was seeking a quiet, secluded place in which to write. The way lay along Warm Springs Road, a turning off the Reno-Pyramid Highway, and twelve miles along, at the Settlemyer Ranch, Harry turned off on a track that ran upward through the sagebrush to reach, three miles further, what seemed to be a ruined shack. This was the Olds Ranch.

Inside the second barbed-wire gate the impression of ruin was confirmed. Corrals, barns, chicken-house and the ranch house itself were in a state of extreme delapidation. The roof was off one barn, the corral fences were down, part of the main ranch-house roof was holed by a fallen tree, three of the eight doors were off their hinges, none of the windows had any glass, the plank porch was a danger to life and limb. Inside was a coal-and-wood stove to reach which one had to jump across a hole in the floor gnawed by a porcupine, and an oil stove unconnected with any source of fuel. The floors were deep with rat effluvia; there was also, Harry said (I am fortunately unable to smell), a less-than-subtle perfume that could have been left only by a skunk. Outside on the rickety porch were sundry droppings left by coyotes, deer, badgers, wildcats and other unidentified Nevada fauna.

As we ate our lunch scooped from a can of pork-and-beans perched on the rusty stove, I looked out of the window at Tule mountain rising forbiddingly in the background, at the lofty cottonwoods in full leaf on the branches of which colorful orioles sang, at the sagging porch and the empty door, at the cockeyed stove, rusted for years, at the gaping hole in the ceiling—and thought of the delicious loneliness of it all. "This," I said to Harry, "is the very place I want." "Are you nuts?" asked Harry.

I suppose I was but with Harry's help I got hold of the

owner, a screen cowboy actor named Archer, who lived in Santa Monica, and made a deal with him—if I put the place in shape I could live there, for one dollar a year.

I lived there eight years and after a few months Ma Olds came visiting. It was Ma Olds, with a husband crippled in a Virginia City mine disaster and three children to raise, who had filed on the ranch as far back as 1909, and built the house.

"What did you raise?" I asked her.

"Cows, horses, turkeys, chickens, sheep, goats, children and dudes," Ma said, promptly. "My husband dug a mine from his wheel-chair—you can see the tunnel up there near the mountain. He never found anything, though."

Ma Olds was approaching 80 when she visited me. She died only a few years ago and I wish I had got her full story in time. She did tell me about the Indian "uprising" in 1911,* when she and her family watched over the ranch with shotguns, and about the monthly visits to Reno in the combination buggy-and-cart she had fashioned to take her produce to market. "It was a bit far to take the children to school—it took two days to get to Reno in the buggy—so I applied to the State to let me start a school in the ranch. They said we had to have seven children—that was the law. Well, I looked around and found three other kids living on ranches down the valley, but we were still one child short."

"So," I said, "what did you do?"

"Looked my husband in the eye and told him what was needed," said Ma. "Few years later I started teaching school. In that room there."

* A gang of Indians left their Humboldt River homes and came west, looting on the way. They were finally rounded up by a sheriff's posse and taken to jail in Reno.

On the marketing trips to Reno, before she acquired a second-hand Model T, Ma would stay the night at Twenty Mile, which was a stage stop almost at the junction of the county road with the highway. (This county road was the first main road built in western Nevada, so they say. It ran from Wads worth to Oregon.) Twenty Mile, like all stage stops in those days, harbored a couple of girls upstairs. "I got plenty of gossip every time I stopped at Twenty Mile," said Ma.

"Let's see," I said. "There are four bedrooms here. You couldn't run many dudes, could you?"

"Four," said Ma, complacently. "Me and Pa and the kids would sleep under the trees."

I found a lady now remarried and living near Reno who was one of the first Olds Ranch dudes. She said that Ma was a wonderful cook. "We had eggs, chicken, turkey, rabbits, beef, deer and porcupine stew. She was pretty good at home-made beer, too," added my informant, rather wistfully, "and there was a Greek down at Settlemyer's who made wine and would sell it to us for a dollar a gallon jar. He used to age it with his cheese under the manure pile."

Ah, those happy, carefree, taxfree jags of Prohibition!

The day Ma came to see me I was baking bread in an old wood stove. "Pretty good living," I said. "Yes," said Ma, "I'd give a lot to be back up here. You wouldn't need a cook, would you?"

Ma had three girls and a boy, Edson. One of the daughters was killed in an accident, both of the others are married to ranchers and also teach school—one in Paradise Valley and one in Fernley.

VI



To Martha Olds Kimball, who lives in Paradise Valley, I am indebted for the following piece of fascinating memorabilia:

"I was 14 when my parents leased Sutcliffe Resort (afterward Pyramid Lake Ranch) from old James Sutcliffe, in the summer of 1927. The old rambling house was still there, built in a long el with the dining-room the foot of the el. This room was pleasing and cool after the long hot drive from Reno over the washboard roads. Rows of small windows lined both sides of the room and a luxurious growth of hops covered them. My sister Leslie and I would open the windows and let in a smell of damp earth and leaves and a lovely cool breeze.

"The kitchen, with its spine-crumpling cement floor, was off the dining-room and from it bedroom after bedroom ran on and on, one after another with no halls and only connecting doors between. Not very handy for guests to get around, but the place lost much of its appeal when my parents bought the resort and in 1929 built a new house on the same spot.

"If I remember correctly our first real 'dudes' were a couple of women who defected from Neill West's T-H Dude Ranch two miles up Hardscrabble Canyon. The ranch had been known by the name of Hardscrabble before it became the first real dude

ranch in Nevada in 1926. Neill and his first wife, Hazel built several rows of cabins and made quite a successful venture out of it. Their main trouble was to keep cowboys to care for the saddle ponies. They were continually being married by the dudes and starting dude ranches of their own.

"One pair, Bud Blundell and Phyllis, gave their place the name of the Monte Cristo Dude Ranch. It was the old Blundell Ranch on Rodeo Creek, about 20 miles from Sutcliffe in the mountains high above Pyramid Lake. Bud (Ivan) and his brother Ike (Ira) had run a small cow outfit up there since the death of their parents. Ike died last fall in Fernley.*

"Bud and Phil in 1928 built the usual rows of small unconnected cabins that were the trademark of the early dude ranches. They filled the old ranch house with leather furniture and made money. They were later divorced and Bud shot himself two years after that.

"Hiram West, brother of Neill West of the T-H, married Mae Barnum, heiress to the Barnum & Bailey fortune, and bought the Big Canyon Ranch at the north end of Pyramid Lake, about six miles up the canyon. Big Canyon later was bought by Beverly and Francesca Blackmer and was run as a dude ranch from about 1934 to 1938.

"Although Sutcliffe Resort was not primarily a dude ranch, dudes brought in welcome revenue. The biggest income was from fishermen, for the big cutthroats* were biting then and on weekends the long dining-room tables, serving 20 at a time, family style, were often set four or five times.

"Sunday dinner was always the same: a huge baked trout

* 1965

* Some cutthroat trout were caught weighing as much as 30 pounds. The lake was all but ruined for fishing when in World War II, the U. S. Navy used it for a bombing range. It has since been restored, but "cutthroats" are few and far between.—Author.

with butter sauce, fried chicken, lemon pie and vegetables fresh from my father's garden. My mother was the cook, Leslie and I the waitresses and, when I could possibly round one up, a Paiute squaw did the dishes. Most of the time I ran all over the Reservation looking for help only to end up doing the mountain of dishes myself.

"The Olds Ranch had been sold but in 1932 my brother Edson Olds bought it from a dude named Marion Dennett; he ran it both as a cattle and a dude ranch until 1937 . . . "

Among those who stayed at the Olds Ranch when Edson ran it were Mr. and Mrs. Alfred E. Brush, later to have the well-known Brush Ranch in Carson City. They had met previously when both were "dudes" at the Monte Cristo Ranch. Mr. Brush died some years ago and Mrs. Brush, while retaining interests in Nevada, lives now in La Jolla, California.

California.

VII



Pyramid Lake Ranch has one of the loveliest sites in all the world. A memorial to "Ma" Olds exists still in the form of a huge fireplace, which she built herself.

The history of this resort itself would make an absorbing book. It was, I believe, established by James Sutcliffe, an army sutler, as a remount station for army convoys travelling between Fort Bidwell, on the Oregon line, and Fort Churchill, on Carson River. That would be somewhere in the sixties or seventies, when "Indian troubles" were rife. Sutcliffe homesteaded the ranch so that when, much later, Congress approved the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation Sutcliffe's and one other homestead, the Whitty, were excluded, to remain small islands within the reservation.

As most travellers know, Pyramid Lake has the reputation of being among the most beautiful desert lakes in the world. I recently flew over the Sea of Galilee, which is said to resemble Pyramid, but the surrounding mountains didn't seem so high.

The lake belongs to the Paiute Indians in perpetuity, unless they are fools enough to let developers in. It is famous for two kinds of fish: the cutthroat trout, which begin to reappear, and the cui-ui (sometimes spelled kwee-wee; the Paiute language is

spoken, not written). The cui-ui is a sucker fish living in the depths of the lake (Pyramid is said to be 1200 feet deep at its deepest) and comes up once a year, in April, to spawn in the Truckee River. It is then slain in thousands* by the Indians, for whom it is traditional food. The cui-ui tastes something like mackerel and is said to have existed since prehistoric days when all the western U. S. was under the sea. Joan Drackert, when she and Harry ran the Pyramid Lake Ranch, had a way of cooking cui-ui that still waters my palate. Of course, only dudes lucky enough to be at Pyramid in spring had a chance to taste cui-ui.

The Drackerts came to Pyramid Lake after World War II and the Navy had vacated. They, like the Navy, leased it on an annual basis from the Kitzelman family.

Before the war and after Ma Olds operated the resort it had been run with considerable success by John Albert Marshall II, familiarly known as "Al", who built new cabins and refurnished the whole.

It was, I am told, Marshall who sold the ranch to Beau Kitzelman of Reno, though title apparently rested with Beau's mother, who had remarried, in Mexico, the famous Mexican painter and muralist Figueroa. Mrs. Kitzelman (again I must say 'I am told') had been a freelance writer in Reno, where she met Kitzelman, heir to a fortune made in barbed wire. She is now deceased, but I understand Beau still lives in Nevada.

Following the departure of the Drackerts in 1958, Beau ran the ranch for awhile and then sold it to Joe Capurro, the cattleman who had bought Big Canyon Ranch from the singer Harry Richman. He in turn sold it, according to my information, to the

* Since the cui-ui will not take bait, they have to be snagged by a three-pronged hook.

young couple running it now. Under their management it has reverted to its original status as a family and fisherman's resort.

Since the great days of Marshall and Drackert, Sutcliffe has been enlarged and made popular by a boat landing and by a motel, bar and snack restaurant built by the Crosbys, father and son, who have been associated with Pyramid Lake both at Nixon and Wadsworth for many years.* There are two other residents, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. "Pat" Pattridge, whose house is built on the original ranch holdings, and an Indian family who live in a small house near the landing and see that fishermen and others using the lake are duly licensed. This small house was formerly the home of the Brewster family, who live now at Bluewater, New Mexico. They were among my best and first friends in Nevada.

Pyramid Lake Ranch ranked as one of the four top Nevada dude ranches for more than a quarter of a century, since the day Ma Olds accepted the first dudes to the day Kitzelman finally relinquished ownership to Joe Capurro. Dudes and artists and fishermen mingled; in its heyday the ranch could accommodate in comfortable cabins some thirty guests. Artists were frustrated by the minute-to-minute color changes of the lake and mountains; it is said that the only artist to really "capture" the lake was a man who studied the scene for a long minute and then turned his back on it to paint. This painting hung for a long time in the living room of the Flying ME Ranch and was destroyed in the fire which burned that lovely ranch in 1963.

* The Crosbys have now leased the bar and snack-bar but retain the motel they have built behind it.

VIII



The business of running a dude ranch requires talents of an unusual sort. The male partner must know how to handle horses and horsemen and sometimes cows. The hostess has to be a sort of mother-confessor to people with broken lives in whom sad and sweet memories mingle with uncertainties for the future.

Women coming for the six-week "cure" often brought their children with them; these had to be amused—fortunately this was easy at Pyramid Lake, where there were horses, bathing and real live Indians. Pyramid Lake Ranch therefore soon became known as a good "vacation" spot for children. Both Harry and Joan were fond of them.

The characters of the different ranch hostesses were widely different, but they all had to have qualities of sympathy and understanding and they all had to know how to coax the minds of their guests away from their troubles.

Accommodations at the T-H might be crude but "Gussie" West, presiding afternoons behind a massive silver tea set, knew how to talk to easterners in their own language. So, likewise, did Joan Drackert, from Baltimore, and Emily Wood, from New York, and the then Mrs. Betty Hardin, who also catered to

women with children and who herself had lived in the world from which they came. She has since remarried and now lives, I am told, in Stockton.

The male managers provided the atmosphere and if there wasn't a man in charge the wrangler took his place. Harry Drackert, once a cowboy in Montana, is a noted horseman and breeder of racehorses; he is a vice president of the Reno Rodeo Association (the richest of its kind in the world) and his thoroughbreds are frequently among the runners on California tracks. The famous horse Washoe Queen was bred by Harry at Pyramid Lake; her progeny now are in training.

IX



Doubling in brass as Harry Drackert's assistant in his thoroughbred breeding operations at Pyramid Lake Ranch and as a "dude wrangler" was "Red" Snow, one of the more celebrated of his ilk but one who, like "Maverick" and Glenn Llewellyn, did *not* marry a dude.

Red was a fine horseman, a kind and considerate shepherd and may have taught more dudes to ride western-style than any other wrangler. He would lead a dozen of them single-file up into the mountains, pointing out the springs, the suspected abodes of wildcats and the nests of chukker partridges (always high up on an inaccessible cliff) and "reading" the brands and ear-clips of various cattle encountered on the trails. Children loved him. I don't know where Red is now; someone said he went to Oregon. My daughter said of him, "Red's a *real* man." A good epitaph when he needs one.

Another of Harry's assistants was a teen-age girl named Marlene Miles, who raced on Nevada's 'bush' tracks until female jockeys were forbidden. She knew horses better than most men—and is now a nurse.

Since the wranglers were such an important feature of the dude ranch operation—the most important, perhaps—this may

be the place to mention a few others. Unfortunately in this matter my research has been difficult, due partly to the peripatetic character of the average wrangler, who kept his job only until he felt the urge to spend his money, and to their habit of being known only by nicknames.

One of the more popular was Gardner Sheehan, who wrangled at Monte Cristo and other ranches. Another whose name is often mentioned when former dudes search their memories was veteran Jimmy Stewart, also a Monte Cristo wrangler and who supervised the first riding stock for Theodore and Emily Wood at Franktown. And there was "Maverick", a man of education whose father was a state assemblyman, but who remained all his life a devoted cowhand and died while managing the Settlemyer ranch for the Matleys.

A typical cowhand and wrangler is Hugh Marjoribanks, who has simplified his name to Marchbanks and who has had his fill of ranch romances. He once made a living trapping wild horses and he is said to be able to fix anything on a ranch from a busted cadillac to a broken tractor with a piece of baling-wire and a jack-knife. The name "Marjoribanks" is that of a family prominent in England these many centuries but when I mentioned this to Hugh, he paused, rolled a cigarette, lit it, blew a satisfying stream of smoke from his nostrils and then said, "Yeah? So what?"

When "Gussie" West was managing the dudes at the T-H some of the wranglers were Bill Thompson, Slim Nott and Johnny Morse. Then there were the celebrated McGinnis brothers, a red-headed pair who looked, talked and romanced as a wrangler should. One married a sister of the Blackmer who at the time ran Washoe Pines and the other put a wedding ring on the finger of an heiress from the east, with whom he acquired the Valley Ranch south of Reno from the father of the late

E. J. Questa, president of the First National Bank. Both banker son and rancher father were popular characters of Reno in the earlier days. Valley Ranch, a large group of stonewalled buildings with a cathedral-like living-room, was once a stage stop on the line from Reno to Virginia City, where they hitched on extra teams for the hard haul up Geiger grade. One snowy winter, through the kindness of a later, now widowed, husband of Mrs. McGinnis, I lived there myself.

Bud McPherson and Lois McPherson ran Dead Man's Ranch, in Washoe Valley. He was a wrangler, she a dude. Following Jimmy Stewart at the Tumbling DW came "Maverick", then Ray Raymond and his wife Ann, and Bill La Duke.

Some time afterward the name of this ranch was changed to the Flying ME and the wrangler was Glenn Llewellyn, now retired, who taught rollicking cowboy ballads to Edie Riley's budgie; Edith was a famed cook and stayed at the M. E. from its beginning to the day Emily Wood regretfully retired, to die after an accident in Carson City. Edie now lives in Reno, a property owner there.

One of the great western Nevada cattle families is the Farris family. Eddie Farris, still a cattleman, was one of the early dude wranglers. I'm told he could sing. So were the Cheatham brothers. Others were known (and remembered) affectionately as "Shorty", "Fatso", "Chuck", "Slats", "Slim", "Sidewinder" and "Gentleman Phil." They must have had other names, but I've been unable to discover what they were.

When the divorce laws first took effect, a dude from the east bought her favorite cowboy a colorful silk scarf, which he promptly wound around his neck to the envy of his brethren assembled with other dudes at Bill Graham's Bank Club. Soon

the silk kerchief became the hallmark of the dude wrangler. Often they were accompanied by some very fancy shirts and, of course, colorful ingrained cowboots. A cowboy doesn't wear this outfit any more and if I were the Reno City Council I'd hire a few to hang around, dressed like old times, on North Virginia Street just south of the tracks.

Two cowboy artists rose to fame on Nevada dude ranches—or rather, on the same dude ranch, but at different times. One was Will James, whose horse pictures and books are collectors' items now. The other was Lyle Hardin, still painting at Virginia City, so I hear.

Lyle is attracted by color as Gaugin was, or as some men are by whiskey. He has a veterinarian's knowledge of the horse's anatomy and a buckaroo's sense of equine movement. His paintings, too, attract the notice of collectors. Lyle married Betty Cathles, from the East, and together they bought Washoe Pines, from Deborah Hall, who had it from the Blackmers. And that leads us, like any wandering wrangler, from one story to another.

X



Of the four Washoe Valley dude ranches, Bud McPherson's was the first to fold. Dead Man's Ranch may have sounded like a western novel but it evidently didn't attract dudes, though it was one of the more comfortable among the smaller ranches.

The other three had strong and contrasting characteristics. Washoe Pines, under the Blackmers, who founded the ranch, and all subsequent owners, attracted the younger would-be divorcées, those who liked to ride, swim and dance rather than drink and gamble. It was especially popular among showgirls who had married wealthy easterners but it had its share of society women, too, so at the Pines they each had opportunity to study the species.

No doubt it was this factor that impelled Claire Boothe Luce, during her stay at the ranch, to write "The Women", the play that brought her fame. Washoe Pines was usually full of the "swingin' set" and a frequent port of call for bachelors in the neighborhood.

The main building at Washoe Pines was a large log cabin, built by the Blackmers with the help of the cowboy artist Will James of trees cut in the vicinity—the ranch is on the edge of the eastern Sierra forest. In this log house were the restaurant, kitchen, bar and ranch office. Scattered about ample and shady grounds were a dozen or more comfortable cabins of varnished pine and at the other end from the corrals was a large swimming pool—the first in Nevada—and the house where the owners lived.

Lyle and Betty were the last owners to run dudes at the Washoe Pines; it is now a boys' camp in summer. If there are ghosts at the place one would be Will James, who did most of his painting there and whose widow, now married to Johnnie Ross, well-known restaurateur, lives at Lake Tahoe.

The other certainly would be Francesca Blackmer—although Francesca is no ghost but very much alive, with homes in Hawaii and Massachusetts; she is married to Judge Jon Wiig, of Honolulu, now retired. The Wiig family were from North Dakota—one of them, Paul, practicing gynecology and obstetrics in Reno—and the Fraziers, of which clan Francesca seems to have been the liveliest judging by the impressions of Reno residents who remember her with pleasure, came from Massachusetts. "She was the most vivid person I ever knew—interested in everything, people, animals, art, music—you could never forget her," one well-known attorney told me. When I repeated this to Mrs. Paul Wiig, wife of the Reno surgeon, she said, "She's just like that today . . ." Francesca, too, I learned, is a descendant of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Francesca Frazier married Beverly Blackmer, whose parents had been running the Washoe Pines, which now was turned over to the young couple. They ran it several years and then, when Hiram West died, bought Big Canyon Ranch.

Hi West is buried on top of Tule Mountain; a number of stalwarts of the region held a service on the peak and Johnnie Matley, the rancher, who owned a resonant tenor, sang the requiem. A brass plate was placed in a boulder to mark the spot, but it has disappeared.

Hi West's wife, Mae Barnum, the Barnum and Bailey heiress, raised Belgian police dogs. When she died she left instructions in her will that they were to be turned loose on the mountain. This was done and, according to local belief, the dogs proved animal experts wrong and mated with the coyotes, which on Tule are notably larger and darker in color than other coyotes in Nevada.

The Hi West ranch house had burned down and was rebuilt by the Blackmers into a mansion that might have been imported bodily from Narragansett. This writer saw the ranch when it was the property of Harry Richman; it was filled then with antiques and various collections of guns, rare books and other things that seemed out of place on a wilderness cow ranch.

The Blackmers sold Big Canyon to a gentleman named Kennedy, a New Yorker who, so it was said, was convinced Hitler was going to win the war and wanted to get as far as possible from the eastern seaboard when the Fuehrer landed. The story goes that he sent his butler ahead to open the house and stock the huge basement with enough canned goods to make the place self-sustaining in a six months' siege. He then crossed the country in a Rolls-Royce and was greeted by the butler, who flung the door open: "Welcome, sir, to your new home!" On which the wealthy owner took a step across the threshold, collapsed and died. One of those yarns worth printing but probably apocryphal.

The Kennedys leased Big Canyon to cattleman Joe Capurro and later sold it to Harry Richman, the nightclub owner and singer famed in Prohibition days, and one of the first men to cross the Atlantic in a private plane.

Richman had lost his voice in the east and, loving an active life in the open air, moved to Nevada where, after several years, his voice came back. Richman used to walk into the Riverside in Reno dressed in the role of gentleman rancher; owner Lou Wertheimer once alleged that when Richman was in town he arranged to be paged on the loud-speaker every hour. Harry said it wasn't true. Richman sold Big Canyon to Joe Capurro, who still owns it. Capurro's young son and his attractive wife, a hard-working couple, now run the ranch successfully.

Fourth and most recent of the Washoe Valley dude ranches wasn't really a dude ranch at all; in fact, it wasn't a "ranch"

either. So far as I know there was never a horse—or a wrangler—on the place. Some years ago Gus Bundy, a New Yorker of Hungarian extraction, was travelling in the Far East and met, in Japan, his mate in the present Jeanne Bundy, whose father, I believe, was a missionary.

Gus returned to the States and shortly afterward Jeanne followed him, taking the long way around through Siberia and Russia. They were married and came to Nevada on their honeymoon—and have lived here ever since.

In the beginning the Bundys lived in a small house on the east side of Washoe Lake; almost immediately opposite, on the other side of the lake, was a tumbledown shack built near the highway on the slopes of Slide Mountain. They bought the property and Gus, a handy man with tools, repaired the shack. "The first day or two," Gus told me, "we had to climb in through the window because the door wouldn't open."

Through the years that followed, while Jeanne was busy raising a notable family, Gus built a ranch house, and then several additional buildings, at first using whatever lumber he could find. Above the place had been a sluice made of timber down which logs had been floated for the Comstock mines; Gus dragged a lot of the timber down and out of it made furniture—some of which might be outstanding in a museum today. Between times Gus worked as a photographer (he has a reputation as a professional), painted pictures (some excellent) and worked at various other jobs, and to feed his young family he shot game in the mountains.

When they had sufficient accommodations the Bundys began taking guests—one or two at a time. Some were dudes, most were artists or writers. They all had to pitch in and help do the chores, axe the firewood and so forth. The Bundy place soon earned a deserved reputation as a place where you could relax, think and even work. As soon as their children grew up the Bundys sold the place and now they live in Carson—still working. A wonderful couple and real pioneers, both of them.

XI



Cooking at all the dude ranches was mostly of the rough-and-ready sort, though at some it was very good. I have spoken already of Joan Drackert's *cui-ui* casserole and Ma Olds evidently was an artist in her own way. Edith Riley, at the Flying ME, was renowned; her bread will be remembered especially by all who lived there. But since most of the dudes were women, and women are not noted gourmets and seem usually to be "on a diet", meals at most ranches tended to be light and simple. One day a week everyone was expected to eat in town.

Speaking of cooking, Quail Canyon Ranch witnessed an incident not long ago that involved Mrs. Adine Stix and Clark Gable. Quail Canyon Ranch originally was little more than a shack, down on the old highway to Pyramid near the Reservation gate. A man named Mullins lived there, and after him "Maverick" ranched the place for awhile.

Later, if I am not wrong, Edith Warfield McCormack, a cousin of the Warfield who married the Duke of Windsor, bought the ranch and moved it up the canyon, where she operated it as a dude ranch until it burned down. When that happened, Mrs. McCormack took over the management of Monte Cristo, seven miles further up the mountain, and afterwards, I believe, ran a place in Minden.

Well, Mrs. Adine Haviland Stix bought the burned ranch and rebuilt it and is still there. A few years ago she loaned the

ranch house to a film company from Hollywood which was making a movie called "The Misfits" on location with Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe as stars.

Mrs. Stix has an artistic temperament and she should have, being a painter of some distinction. Clark Gable likewise owned an artistic temperament—or if not he fooled a lot of people including this writer, who knew him before he became a star.

One day there was no shooting, Clark was absent, so Mrs. Stix cooked dinner for Marilyn and others of the cast and production crew that were around. This wasn't in her contract, but Mrs. Stix likes to cook and is rumored to be very good at it. This time she added garlic, which Marilyn liked and Clark didn't. As Clark wasn't around this didn't matter—but, just as they were finishing, in walked Gable. He took one sniff and walked out again. "We had been good friends until then," Mrs. Stix told me, "but after that, he barely spoke to me. It wasn't like him but I concluded he had been miffed by not being invited."

It was only afterwards, too late, that Mrs. Stix learned that it had not been her dinner that had worried Clark Gable. He had just visited his doctor and knew he was suffering from an incurable cancer. Confiding in no one he died a few weeks later, but only after the picture was "in the can". It was not a very good picture and it was a jinx for Marilyn too, as it turned out. She didn't live to make another film, either.

The Monte Cristo Ranch, seven miles up the mountain from Quail Canyon, is now the property of North American Aviation, which as a result of government and state grants and the acquisition of most of the other ranches, now owns a huge tract of land stretching from Sparks to Pyramid Lake, a distance of more than 30 miles. Behind tall fences and heavily guarded gates, North American makes rocketdyne, a fule for space rockets.*

* Nevada has suffered more than any other state by atomic and rocket discoveries. Eighty per cent of the state can't be taxed because it is owned by the federal government and a good slice of the rest is owned by companies like North American. However, Nevada is the seventh largest state and still has room for some of her own citizens.

The irony of this is that after acquiring all the other ranches, including their government grazing rights, North American now is in the cattle business. The North American Cattle Company (the foreman of which, I understand, is David Stix, Mrs. Stix's son) is now *one of the largest in the state . . .*

There is much of interest in the Monte Cristo, which I was lucky enough to see a few days before North American took it over. Mrs. W. Dalton La Rue was kind enough to show me the ranch. Mr. La Rue is a chartered public accountant in Reno specializing in ranches; when they left Monte Cristo they took over the well-known Winnemucca Ranch between the Dogskins and Tule Mountain and there they are today.*

One of the original stakes of the Indian reservation forms a cornerstone of the Monte Cristo. There is a fence fashioned out of old horseshoes—an invention, I believe, of Mrs. La Rue. Water is brought to the ranch by that same hydraulic ram invented in the sixteenth century by the extraordinary Leonardo da Vinci—possibly the only pump of its kind operating in North America.

There are, or were, a number of ore wagons around the ranch; these were used in a clandestine silver mine, one of the Pyramid group, which supplied silver to the South during the Civil War—while Comstock silver was financing the North.

I don't know if the Pyramid Mines have been fenced off by North American but if not they may still be seen by anyone curious enough to turn off Highway 33 about a mile south of the Indian fence.

Over the hill from the mines is the Nevada Dominion, where "Scotty" Campbell lives. Scotty acquired title from his friend "Frenchie", a small rancher and miner who was acquitted in Reno of the killing of a shepherd and died soon afterward.* If

* 1967

* "Frenchie" hated shepherders and had posted a sign saying "KEEP OUT! YOU BRING SHEEP HERE, I KILL YOU." They did, and he did, and the court found that under Nevada law, since he had title to the land, "Frenchie" was justified.

"Scotty" hasn't already succumbed to the blandishments of North American—who apparently can't bear anyone to live within miles of their experiment—I am prepared to bet, knowing "Scotty", that he's a very prickly thorn in a big corporation's flesh.

An outstanding feature of Monte Cristo is the view. From a point near the ranch house one may see the entire magnificent spread of Pyramid Lake and Sand Desert beyond. No one now may see it, of course, without North American's permission.

A successful dude-cowboy combination was Dorothy and Joe Richardson. High in the mountains overlooking the town of Wadsworth, which was the first large town in western Nevada and is now a whistle stop,* was an old gold camp named Olinghouse, probably after its discoverer. The gold was placer and came from a stream that meandered down the canyon, on both sides of which were the cabins of the miners.

When the Tonopah and Goldfield rushes began Olinghouse was deserted, the miners simply packing their tools and other possessions and moving out, leaving the cabins standing. Several of these cabins were put together by the Richardsons who built a two-storey house at the head of the canyon, christened the place the "Bar Topsy R Dude Ranch" and made the round of the Reno lawyers in search of dudes.

After a few seasons the property was taken over by Peggy Marsh, a Virginian who had come to Pyramid Lake and stayed. Some years ago Peggy described to this writer an episode of the Bar Topsy R while she managed it. "I was living in the main house and there were four dudes in a cabin below. One stormy night the canyon flooded and when I awoke in the morning the dudes' cabin was nowhere to be seen. I found it 100 yards down-canyon, with the dudes still fast asleep . . ." Peggy later sold her property at Sutcliffe to the Crosbys and, I believe, has returned to Virginia.

* But I'm told the trains don't even whistle there now.

XII



Before World War II, Al Peigh, now the owner of the T-H and who has bought and sold many Nevada ranch properties, acquired some acreage where the land slopes down from Mount Rose, the mountain that rears a snowy head over Reno. A stream runs down the mountain at that point which during the Comstock era had been boxed in to carry logs.

A little east of where the mill had been, Al built a charming dude ranch with a small but pretty main house, half a dozen furnished cabins and a stable with some good riding stock. Peigh later sold the Lazy A to Mr. and Mrs. Winne, and Mrs. Winne, with her son, still runs it. The Winnes are an old Nevada family.

The Lazy A, with the Donner Trail at Verdi, are the only two dude ranches left in western Nevada, though a few near Reno operate as motels.

Above the Lazy A on the Mount Rose Road, near Galena Creek, was Mount Rose Lodge, a very popular dude ranch built by Lamar and Mrs. Washington and managed afterwards by Joe Schlederer and his wife, the former Jane Washington. This ranch was later remodeled by a new owner, John S. Sinai, still a prominent Reno lawyer, who rented it to Mr. and Mrs. John Morrow, who had tent cottages in the summer as well as the

regular quarters. Still later the Lodge became a restaurant and bar run by Walt and Nell Daly and it was Nell Daly, according to Mr. Sinai, who invented the spinach salad and the stuffed baked potatoes which "are now so common in this area".

John Ross, later to build the Christmas Tree higher up, also ran a restaurant at Galena Creek—his first of several such ventures. It was John Ross, you will remember, who married Alice, the widow of the cowboy painter Will James. They live, I believe, at Lake Tahoe.

About the time Al Peigh built the Lazy A, another ranch called the Lazy ME was built by Caleb Whitbeck with, I understand Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. as a silent partner (though I can't recall Neil being silent in anything). Nearest dude ranch to Reno was the Alamo, a ranch specializing in saddle stock run by Lyle Prescott, who also, later, ran the Mayberry Ranch on the Truckee River. Mr. Prescott's daughter Patricia is married to David Goldwater, an attorney now in Las Vegas.

Between the Alamo and the Lazy A were several dude ranches, a few of them still existing as motels. They included the Flying N, the Palomino, the Del Monte and the Biltmore. Various others came into being and vanished from time to time.

The name of Al Peigh crops up wherever and whenever you talk about ranches in western Nevada, dude or not. He has had a fantastic career and is said to have played football for several middlewestern colleges before he came to the University of Nevada and starred in the team there. He has been a noted yachtsman and dreams of building a marina at Pyramid Lake that will make Pyramid "the finest sailing body of water in the world". Beyond all this Al is a cattleman, a horseman, a practical rancher and an astute businessman. He is married to Theo, one of the vivacious and fascinating women of Nevada.

The Flying N, mentioned above, was run as a practical cattle ranch catering to dudes by Buck Neilson and his wife, and is now owned by the well-known Reno architect Frank Green.

XIII



West of Reno in the small town of Verdi (pronounced in Nevada Ver-di) is Donner trail, first of the luxury dude ranches, which was taken over a few years ago by Harry and Joan Drackert and is now, except for the smaller Lazy A, the only such ranch in existence. Dudes now rent apartments or live in the dozens of hotels and motels that have sprung up in Reno. In the heyday of the dude ranches Reno's population was about 15,000. Today the census gives it close on 70,000, which doesn't include its "dormitory town" Sparks, with 25,000.

Dudes still like to ride and they still enjoy communal ranch life, but they insist on comfort, too. I have never stayed there but have heard that Donner Trail (usually catering to a full house) has accommodations equal to those of a luxury hotel. But I'm afraid guests no longer enjoy Joan's baked cui-ui. Her interests, when she has time out from the somewhat exigent duties of hostess, run to trapshooting. Harry still raises thoroughbreds.

One of the reasons Reno was popular among the very rich who needed divorces was that they could be guarded on the dude ranches from newspapermen and photographers. This was not always easy, as I saw during the months I lived at the Flying ME, when I was often pestered by friends in my own profession for tips as to dudes in residence. Newspapers would have paid a

lot for some of the news I cheerfully suppressed. This problem was accentuated for Harry and Joan at the Donner Trail last year* when two famous names, those of Mary Rockefeller and Dolly McMasters, appeared on the register. Eventually both were ferreted out but through no fault of their hosts.

* 1966.

XIV



South from Reno to Carson City in the days of the dude ranches and until 1950 was the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, a toy built with a man-size purpose in the days of the Comstock lode. Considerations of upkeep (the high trestles alone demanded constant vigilance) had forced the abandon of the Virginia City section of the line, which ran from Carson City to Virginia City by way of New Empire, where the smelters were.

But for a long time the line from Reno to Carson City and Minden operated and was a "must" for every visitor to the region.* Of all the narrow-gauge railways in the United States the Virginia & Truckee was probably the best-known and, except for one in Colorado, the most scenic.

Before reaching Carson City the line, with two combination baggage-mail-passenger trains a day, ran through beautiful Washoe Valley, noted for its tall mountains on the west and its lake on the east, as well as for its apples, ranches and cool mountain streams that ran down to form the lake.

The railroad took advantage of one of these streams, Franktown Creek, to fill a watertank and as the trains stopped there

* Best known book about the V. & T. is the one written by the late Lucius Beebe and his partner, Charles "Chuck" Clegg.

fifteen minutes a small hotel and bar was added to the station. This, in the early thirties, was sold by the railroad to Molly (Waterman) and Pat McGuire, whose guests were largely transients.

To Franktown, on the tiny puffing train, came Dore and Emily Pentz Wood, dudes at the time at Monte Cristo. They were in Nevada as a result of extravagant urgings by Dore's brother, George, who had come as a visitor and fallen in love with the state. Also, during cavalry training some years before, Theodore had ridden down King's Canyon into Eagle Valley and had remarked the old Smith Ranch, at its foot. He had determined to buy it one day and become a rancher.

Instead, Dore and Emily bought the Franktown Hotel, built additions to it and began the operation of a dude ranch at first named the Tumbling DW. Later, after Dore and Emily had separated, she added more rooms to the ranch, changed its name to the Flying ME and built a swimming pool.

The Flying ME for many years was the most famous dude ranch in Nevada. It catered to older and therefore often wealthier divorcées and, besides, to prominent people from eastern cities and to ranchers from Nevada and California. Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt came for a vacation. Clark Gable often dropped in from Hollywood. The Duchess of Argyle came from Scotland. There were titled English people, American millionaires and wealthy Europeans. Not all come for "the cure". They came because of Emmy Wood's unique personality. To know Emmy was to love her and I, who lived many months at the ranch, should know.

Here I am going to quote—without apology, for it seems necessary—a few sentences from a Memoriam to Emily Wood

that I wrote in 1966 after she died, following an accident in Carson City. They were from the heart:

"I was privileged to witness the compassionate side of Emmy Wood. I saw deserted women arrive, tears still drying on their cheeks, some of them with the world crashing about them after fifteen or twenty years of marriage, some guiltless, some guilty, some wealthy (in money if in little else), some beautiful and young, some raddled and old, some with so little cash that Emmy secretly offered them special rates if they would 'help her out' . . .

"Emmy believed in people . . . in spite of the business she was in, surely one of the most heart-breaking businesses in the world. She saw good in everyone. She never sued a delinquent. She never complained. She owned a God, or a God owned her, but this was something she never spoke about. Her religion had no need of priests and several were her devoted friends.

"Emily Wood brought elegance to the dude ranch business but much more than that she brought a quality of human understanding. Her gift was to give hope to the hopeless . . ."

XV



Some of the best-known business women, many stage stars, a number of celebrated novelists, playwrights, writers of both sexes obtained their freedom in Nevada during the period of the old dude ranches.

In the beginning divorces were the privilege of the wealthy: lawyers, the train trip, the six weeks' stay at anything from \$10 a day to \$250 a week, the losses at gambling, all added up.

One of the provisions of the law was that, to be granted a divorce in Nevada, an applicant had to be a *resident* and to be able to prove that during the six weeks of residence she had not been out of the state for more than 24 hours. Nowadays they can fly to San Francisco for lunch or dinner and stay within the law but in earlier years the law's effect was to make them remain within the boundaries of Nevada throughout their stay.

On "court day" the manageress of the ranch had to bear witness to the fact that the law had been kept. False testimony in this regard meant prison. Today (depending on the lawyer and the wealth of the applicant) divorces are generally cheaper and many women obtain employment in Nevada to pay their expenses. Thus the *chic* of the Nevada divorce has all but gone.

Divorcées still flock to Nevada though their numbers from the east have somewhat decreased since other states and Mexico

have offered quicker and less expensive ways to become unmarried.

About two-thirds of Nevada divorcées come now from California, where (according to *Newsweek*) *one in two marriages end in court*. The two remaining dude ranches, however, continue to cater chiefly to women from the east. At one of them I met a young woman with a baby who was the third generation to come to Nevada for the "cure" — both her mother and her grandmother had been to Reno before her.

"You know," she said, "there ought to be a club of people who lived in the old dude ranches—I've heard so much about them! My grandmother thought of starting such a club, just among the people she knew."

However necessary, however excusable, divorce remains one of the unhappiest experiences of life, a monkey-wrench thrown into careers, an amputation of hopes and happiness and a frustration of desire. The therapy of the dude ranch was effective and needed.

When these women came to Nevada nearly all were in need of sympathy, kindness and understanding and a shoulder to weep on. These the open-hearted West freely gave them.

But what they most required was a complete change of scene to help take their minds off all they were losing. The dude ranch initiated them into a world most of them had never known. They gained in health and brand new experience and collected memories to replace those they hoped to lose. Some even found love and a renewed faith in men.

B. W.
Carson City, 1967

BASIL WOON

The author of this little book, which he calls a "mini-history", is an Englishman who has lived in Nevada for the past 16 years and who first knew the state when he reached Reno in 1910 on the rods of a pullman attached to the *Overland Limited*, remaining briefly to act as a bartender at the World Championship fight between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries. (It was the first and only time he ever was a bartender, but he has had some experience elsewhere as mule-skinner, dishwasher, cowboy, cusinjero, printer, elevator-boy and—oh, yes, as chief correspondent for Universal Service in Paris for several years between the wars. He also mined gold in Alaska and was with Francisco Villa in Mexico and received a pilot's license in 1913 from the Aeroclub of America vouched for by the Stinson Flying School in San Antonio; he later flew with the Ninth Squadron, American Air Service, during the Meuse-Argonne battle, and was shot down.) Basil Woon loves Nevada and France. He has written a good many books, some of which were "Arizona's Yesterday", "Sarah Bernhardt As I Knew Her", "The Paris That's Not in the Guide-Books", "From Deauville to Monte Carlo", "San Francisco and the Golden Empire", "Incredible Land" (that one was about the Hollywood of the Thirties, where Woon wrote upwards of 40 scripts for various producers); "Atlantic Front", the saga of the British Merchant Navy; "Hell Came to London" (that was about the Blitz, to see which Woon had a front-line flat in Bloomsbury); "Roosevelt, World Statesman", the first biography published of America's war president; an autobiography called "Eyes West", which he published in 1940, at what he considered to be "the end of my life" (the entire first edition was blown up by a bomb that destroyed Simpkins-Marshall, the book wholesalers, on September 7, day of publication, but the publishers somehow found more paper and the book went on to become a best-seller); and, he says, a few odds and ends since, like the little book he wrote 10 years ago called "Gambling in Nevada", which was authoritative at the time. He is working now on his *magnum opus*, about America as he has seen it since his arrival some years before the first world war. His present home is in Carson City, Nevada, where the pride of his miniature two-acre estate is a wine-cellar; Woon became an oenophile somewhere along the way. Recently he decided to sell "Quail Heights" (his present home) and start "a new life" in the Mediterranean Alps. "After all," he says, "I'm only 74. . . ." Woon is a member of several clubs and organizations both national and international, including the Overseas Press Club of America, the Press Clubs of San Francisco and Reno, the Adventurers Club of New York, and E. Clampus Vitus, one of the oldest historical associations in America, founded on the Mother Lode about a century ago.

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