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Sidelights on the C. E. Summer Camp

BY L. C. NOLAND, C. E. '23

Early on the morning of June 11, the forty-four Civils who attended summer camp arrived at Keyser, W. Va., a small town on the Maryland border. Our first experience with camp life in the hills was at Mechanicsburg Gap in Hampshire County. We were encamped in an apple orchard formerly occupied by pigs. As pigs have a propensity for rooting, the ground was not overly smooth, but I suppose it was deemed a fit location for a gang of rooting college men.



One of the Parties—Civil Summer Camp

Making camp on Saturday, we had all day Sunday in which to explore our new neighborhood, find a good swimmin' hole, and go wild-cat hunting, which lasted far into the night. (For further particulars see Bill Martter or Johnny DePuy.)

Bright and early Monday morning we began our thirty days' training in practical surveying by tramping five miles to the town of Romney, the point at which the road survey was to begin. Some of us, in our zeal, tramped right through the town and nearly a mile on the other side. It was never fully determined just who blundered, but had we anticipated the last long mile into camp that night, it is quite certain that such a fatal mistake would not have been made.

It was not long before the lure of Ohio State began to have a telling effect. (Some of our social lights were telling the townspeople of Romney) and we had frequent evening visits by automobile parties, among whom were a number of the fair sex. It was at these functions that Slim Royer and Fat Robins got in their best work of the summer and the visitors were entertained by music, both vocal and instrumental.

The effect of the mountain air, and long tramps over the hills was noticeable on the appetites of the gang, and was no doubt the underlying cause of the troubles of Tom, the cook. Great inroads upon the food supply were made by mysterious night prowlers and oftimes Tom had great difficulty in getting breakfast.

In two weeks the party was divided, part of us going into Pendleton County, near the Smoke Hole settlement, the seat of the moonshine industry of West Virginia. Smoke Hole was so named because of the smoke, caused by the moonshine stills, which constantly hangs over the valley. Countless stories were rampant of the mysterious disappearance of revenue officers who had attempted to bring the law to bear on these distillers of the forbidden beverage. One look at the entrance to the Hole was enough to convince us that these stories were probably not fictitious.

We were encamped on a hill-side about 1500 feet elevation, from which a beautiful view of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia could be had. One Sunday morning was spent exploring a cave at the entrance of Smoke Hole. Several copperheads were met and disposed of, during which we became better acquainted with their characteristics and habits as told by one of the natives. "They look jis' like the leaves, an' they're under every hickry bush' an' they reach right out an'

tap you. You can't see 'em but you gotta watch out fer 'em."

Much of the Smoke Hole survey was new location, and wading streams, clinging to the sides of cliffs and shooting cross-sections at sixty degree angles was no uncommon thing.

Our next camp was at Landes, in Grant County, which we also had to "watch out for" or we should have missed it. It was here that the Smoke Hole quartet came into prominence, and the famous debate between Fitzer and Snider on "The Milk Question" took place. Our leisure moments—such as after eight p. m. on the Fourth of July—were spent in shoe fights and howling down the celebrators homeward bound from a day's festivities in Petersburg.

As we approached the main camp near Burlington, on the next lap of our journey, Snider's warwhoop threw a righteous fear into the heart of old Tom, the cook, for it spelled the doom of the commissary. As Tom expressed it, "Now mah troubles are goin' to begin all over again."

The night of our return was spent in one grand jubilee about a monster camp fire where stories were told, speeches were made, songs were sung and stunts were put on. The features were a bout between Red Newlun and Rip Van Swingle, and the true (?) story of Roscoe of the child who led a rattlesnake down the streets of Romney by a string. "And a little child shall lead them."

When, at the end of thirty days, the choice was given of leaving or remaining to finish the office work, practically the entire camp chose to remain another week. We were credited with the completion of thirty-eight miles of field and office work, which gave mute testimony that the five weeks were not passed, but spent—and well spent, at that. As to the value of experience gained, no better place to gain experience could have been chosen than these tortuous, mountain roads of our neighbor state, West Virginia.